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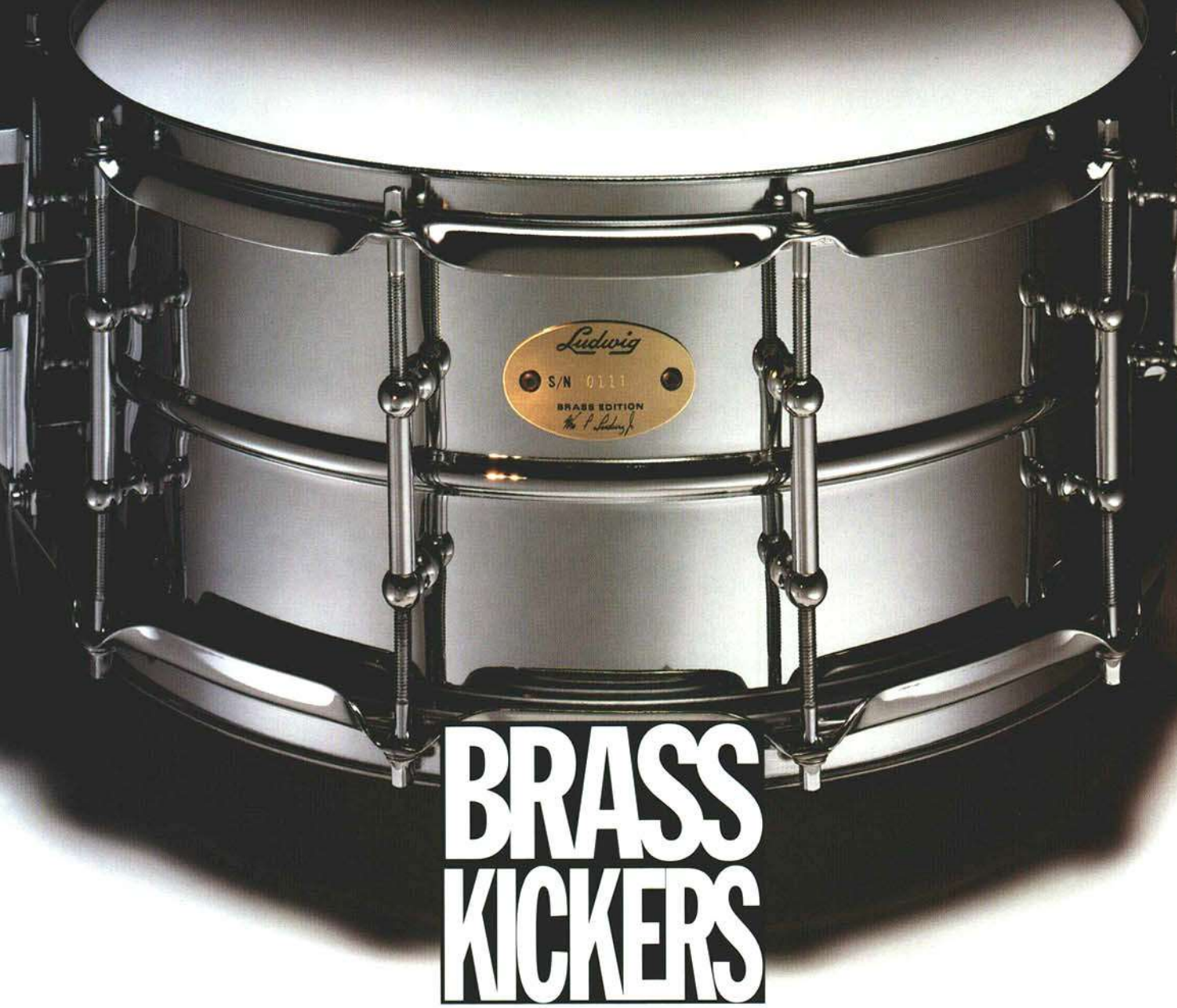

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REMO
USA

Cut Us Some Slack!

Saturday evening, 7:00 P.M., gig night. Feeling a bit underenthused, I do what I usually do when I need a little inspiration: turn to my all-time favorite band, The Who. A friend had just lent me the video of their performance at the 1970 Isle Of Wight festival, and I'd been waiting for the right time to watch it. I switched on the TV and VCR.

The ultimate visual drummer, Keith Moon was simply amazing. Of course he was sloppy. Of course he regularly tested the bounds of taste. But no one else on the planet conveyed a joy for playing more, and no one else could have pushed The Who to the heights of rock 'n' roll euphoria the way he did.

After ten minutes, I couldn't *wait* to get to the club.

Monday morning, 8:10 A.M. Predictably, traffic is heavy as I crawl north out of Hoboken, fighting against New York City inbound traffic. *Predictably,* westbound Rt. 495 is unreasonably backed up. *PREDICTABLY,* traffic finally opens up on Rt. 3 only to be slowed down again by some moron going 45 in the fast lane. The news over the car stereo suddenly becomes an annoyance I can no longer bear, and it seems clear that the only way to save this morning is to pop in a tape of something very loud, very cool—and VERY UNPREDICTABLE!

Ah, my Led Zeppelin *BBC Sessions* cassette. As I slow the car down at another bottleneck, the band kicks into "How Many More Times," and John Bonham is just...possessed. I'm thinking, Wow, dig how those guys give Bonham free rein to do his thing. It's like telepathy: "Go for it, man, we'll be here when you come back." I'm thinking, Without the other players' trust and enthusiasm, Moon and Bonham would never have discovered those famous, uncharted musical territories. Right on!

The guy in the car next to me has a strange look on his face, and I realize that I'm laughing out loud at the sheer audacity of Zeppelin's performance. My morning has been saved.

The next time your bandleader complains you didn't quite come down on 1 during that fill coming out of the second verse, tell him to buy a copy of *Isle Of Wight* or *BBC Sessions.* And tell him I sent you, okay?

Adam Budofsky

MODERN DRUMMER

Volume 23, Number 8

The World's Most Widely Read Drum Magazine

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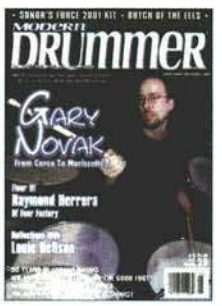
GARY NOVAK



I really enjoyed the May '99 cover story on Gary Novak. It was a gas to see him getting the recognition he deserves. I met Gary when he was about seventeen. I was playing at a sports bar on the north side of Chicago, when up walks this kid who asks if he can sit in with the band. I didn't know him, but the guys in the band did, so I said, "Sure, I've gotta go to the bathroom anyway." In short order I hear the band doing a cover of Peter Gabriel's "Sledgehammer"—and this kid was *burning.* He was over-playing, as any seventeen-year old with the kind of chops this kid had would do. But he was also absolutely *nailing* everything he went for. I became a fan of his talent, and we became fairly good friends over the years.

Ironically, Gary is just one more drummer to break out on the national scene from Chicago's rich talent pool. You've got Oscar Seaton with Lionel Richie, Steve Gillis with Filter, Perry Wilson with Cassandra Wilson, Ernie Adams with Al Di Meola (he's actually from Milwaukee, but we'll lay claim to him), Teddy Campbell with Gerald Levert, and a few others. Very cool!

Clyde Davis
via Internet

ALEX SOLCA PHOTOS

Every time I open up a new article of *MD* I notice Alex Solca's pictures. The May issue shots of Raymond Herrera were great. Just wanted to tell Mr. Solca to keep up the great work!

Nole James Kennedy
Scottsdale, AZ

RAYMOND HERRERA

Thank you for printing the article on Fear Factory's drummer, Raymond Herrera. Herrera is the influence that got me started using two bass drums—and not just playing 16th or 32nd notes on them. I really appreciate the fact that your past few issues have focused on the new wave of metal drummers. I'd like to see more on it. Thanks again.

Name not given
via Internet

LUDWIG AT 90

Great article on Ludwig. The first concert I ever saw was REO Speedwagon in 1974. Their drummer, Alan Gratzer, played a Ludwig kit. There was nothing flashy going on, but man, could that guy keep time! He and his Ludwig kit worked together with the precision of a Swiss timepiece. Whenever I see or read about Ludwig I think of Gratzer and the great sound and timing he got out of those drums. It's good to see that "The Most Famous Name In Drums" is making a comeback.

Kevin Ogle
Oklahoma City, OK

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

I was in the Yamaha "Rising Star Showcase" at the 1998 Montreal Drum Fest, and I was really honored to find my picture in your May '99 coverage of that event. However, the names of the players are not listed in correct order. The real order is (back) Iohann Laliberte, (front, left to right) Jesse Cahill, Jean-Fran9ois Forget, and Jean-Francois Gagne. Thanks for everything.

Iohann Laliberte
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Yesterday I was working on some future articles for *Modern Drummer* when the phone rang. To my surprise, it was Jim Keltner, who was calling to thank me for my *Artist On Track* article on him in the April '99 *MD,* and for the good work that I had been doing in that department. When I insisted that it was / who should be thanking *him* for the hundreds of great recordings that he has done throughout the years, he was a little embarrassed. Jim Keltner is one of the true gentlemen of drumming.

Jim was also calling to correct an error I had made in my article. Although my research had indicated Jim as the drummer on Harry Nilsson's *The Point,* Jim told me that it was the great Earl Palmer. (This is what happens when record companies don't list personnel on their recordings!)

Jim didn't want to write a letter to *MD,* because he didn't want to seem "ungracious." However, because future drummers might refer to the article, Jim wanted credit to be given where it is due. So he called me, and I'm writing this letter to correct my own mistake.

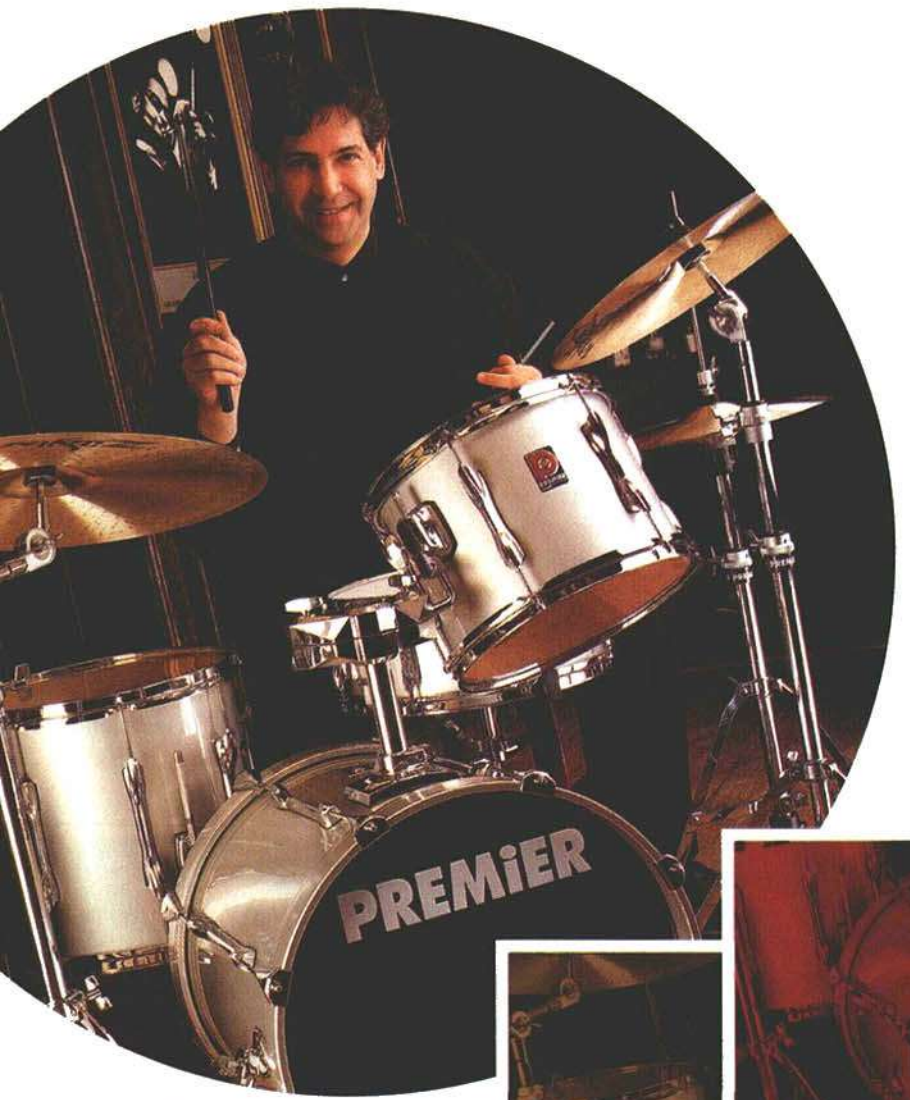
I thank Jim Keltner for his selfless attitude towards music, for the great recordings he has graced, and for that beautiful telephone conversation.

Mark Griffith
Wallington, NJ

Following my February '99 *Different View* interview with Wallace Roney, I received feedback from Wallace. Although he was generally pleased with the way the article reflected his portrayals of the famous drummers with whom he worked, he was concerned that statements attributed to him about Louis Hayes were intended, in fact, for Billy Higgins. Says Wallace, "Billy has always played at the correct volume and dynamics, and with a sensitive touch. I wouldn't want to short-change one of the great drummers of my experience, and of our time."

Our conversation turned to the reason he purchased a Gretsch kit in response to a Chick Corea record date. Wallace had good reason to fear that his drummer might "choke" during the session. As he stresses, "Knowing that he was nervous, it would

Pay Your Dues With Your Heart Not Your Wallet



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Played by Danny Gottlieb

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But most of all, he told us with a smile, they shouldn't *be* expensive — they should just *sound* expensive.

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have been inhuman of me not to let him use his Gretsch drumkit—even though I provided him with a great kit." Thus, Wallace did the next best thing to appease—and relax—his drummer. In the spirit of Miles Davis (who had advised Wallace to obtain his own drumset in order to control the band sound), Wallace purchased his own Gretsch kit with an 18" bass drum. "It was my drum of choice anyway," he says, "from day one."

Finally, speaking of the rare 3-ply Gretsch kit that he and Nodar Rode re-covered in turquoise satin flame, Wallace says: "It was originally a Cadillac green *Birdland* kit. The only reason I changed the finish was that the Cadillac green was scuffed and pitted beyond recognition. However, I'm thinking of restoring it to the original finish, in keeping with its distinguished lineage."

Wallace is grateful for all the feedback he has received on the article. Just don't try to coax any of those drums and cymbals from him.

T. Bruce Wittet
Gloucester, Ontario, Canada

YOU INSPIRE US

Just a quick note to say thanks for keeping me and so many other drummers inspired. There's nothing better than finding a copy of *Modern Drummer* in my mailbox each month. The magazine just seems to get better and better.

You guys have really helped my drumming with your interviews, exercises, and all the playing tips. Actually, you're probably the biggest reason why I've improved on the drums.

And by the way, don't worry about those other drum magazines out there. I've seen your competition and they're a real joke. I'm shocked at how little drumming information they have and how messy they look—very tough to read and learn anything from. Plus, they seem to think they're cool with all of those silly sarcastic comments. I'm looking for valuable drumming information, and a magazine I can enjoy and learn something from. I don't want or need a cheap imitation of *Modern Drummer,* which is all they really are.

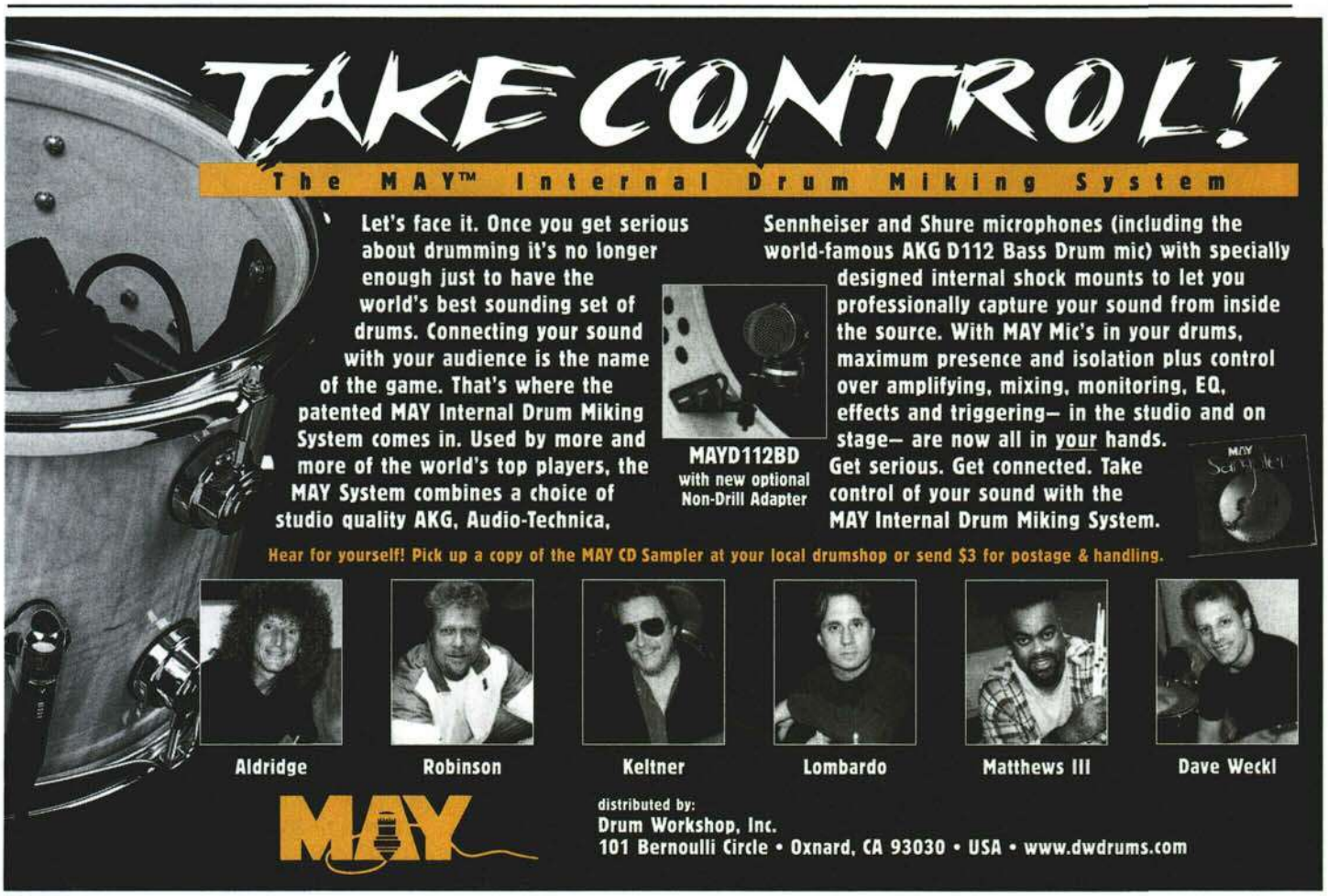
Jim Fletcher
via Internet

MD GIVEAWAY LIMITATIONS

I've been subscribing to *MD* since it was a quarterly magazine, and this is the first time I've written—even though there is something about *MD* that makes me extremely discontented.

Every month I see on *MD's* cover: "The world's most widely read drum magazine." Yet rule #8 of your Giveaway contests states: "Open to residents of US and Canada...." Should I regard this as ignorance (there *are* a few other countries in the "world"), as a (misplaced) feeling of national superiority, or merely as a successful attempt to insult me and every other *MD* reader from the "outside" world?

Furthermore, I don't think this is the way to promote what *MD* often professes as the "world-wide community of drummers." And from the point of view of the sponsoring companies, although all of them are (or *should* be) interested in world-wide sales, rule #8 makes us think otherwise. I really can think of no reason for this rule. (Before you mention shipping costs, please look at the "shipping cost" of our monthly copy of MD.) Along with myself, every



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Marco Minnemann (Germany)
H-Blockx, Illegal Aliens

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Clyde Stubblefield (USA)
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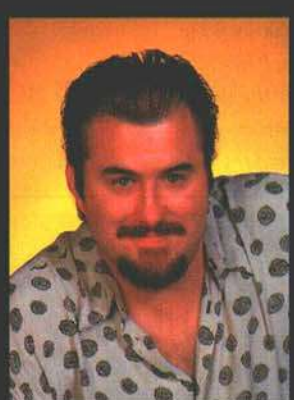
James Brown



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Tom Williams (USA)
Nashville Studios

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Peter Michael Escovedo (USA)
E-Train

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Keith Capsuto (USA)
E´nuff Said, Clinician

"outside-world" reader of your magazine should have the right to take part in your giveaways.

Noten Ludo
Bocholt, Belgium

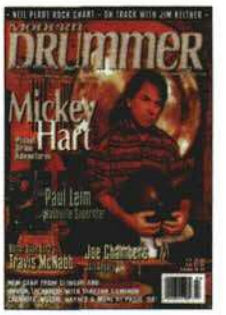
Editor's note: Over the past few months we've received a lot of mail from readers who have been scrutinizing the small print on our contests. The line that's caused the most consternation is the one that reads: "This Giveaway is open to residents of the United States and Canada, except residents of Florida and the province of Quebec." "Why," we are frequently asked, "are almost all foreign readers excluded from participating?" The answer is simple: We must do this to comply with the law.

Most countries have strict rules about the ways in which raffles and contests may be conducted. As if that weren't bad enough, many states and provinces (or their equivalents) have additional rules of their own. This legal maze was erected to protect the participants from crooks who want to take the money and run. This is a good thing—no one wants to let the crooks have free rein—but it also means we cannot automatically include all readers in our contests. Complying with the laws in every jurisdiction where our readers live would require pages and pages of separate rule listings for virtually every foreign country, to say nothing of a tremendous expenditure of time and money. As a result, our contest rules were structured to meet the laws where the majority of our readers live. You 'll note that even in the two countries where the Giveaway is legal (the US and Canada) the state of Florida and the province of Quebec are excluded—again due to legal restrictions. So it isn't just readers from foreign countries who are affected by this situation.

Since, as you rightly point out, Modern Drummer *is a world-wide publication, we're not happy with these exclusions. We'd prefer to make our Giveaways open to all readers in all countries, states, and provinces. But unless laws are changed in those areas, that's simply not possible right now.*

TRAVIS MCNABB

I really enjoyed your April '99 interview with Travis McNabb! Travis is a great drummer—not only in the studio, but live as well—and he doesn't get the credit that he deserves. Its great to see that you are giving coverage to the "under-exposed" drummers of the'90s.

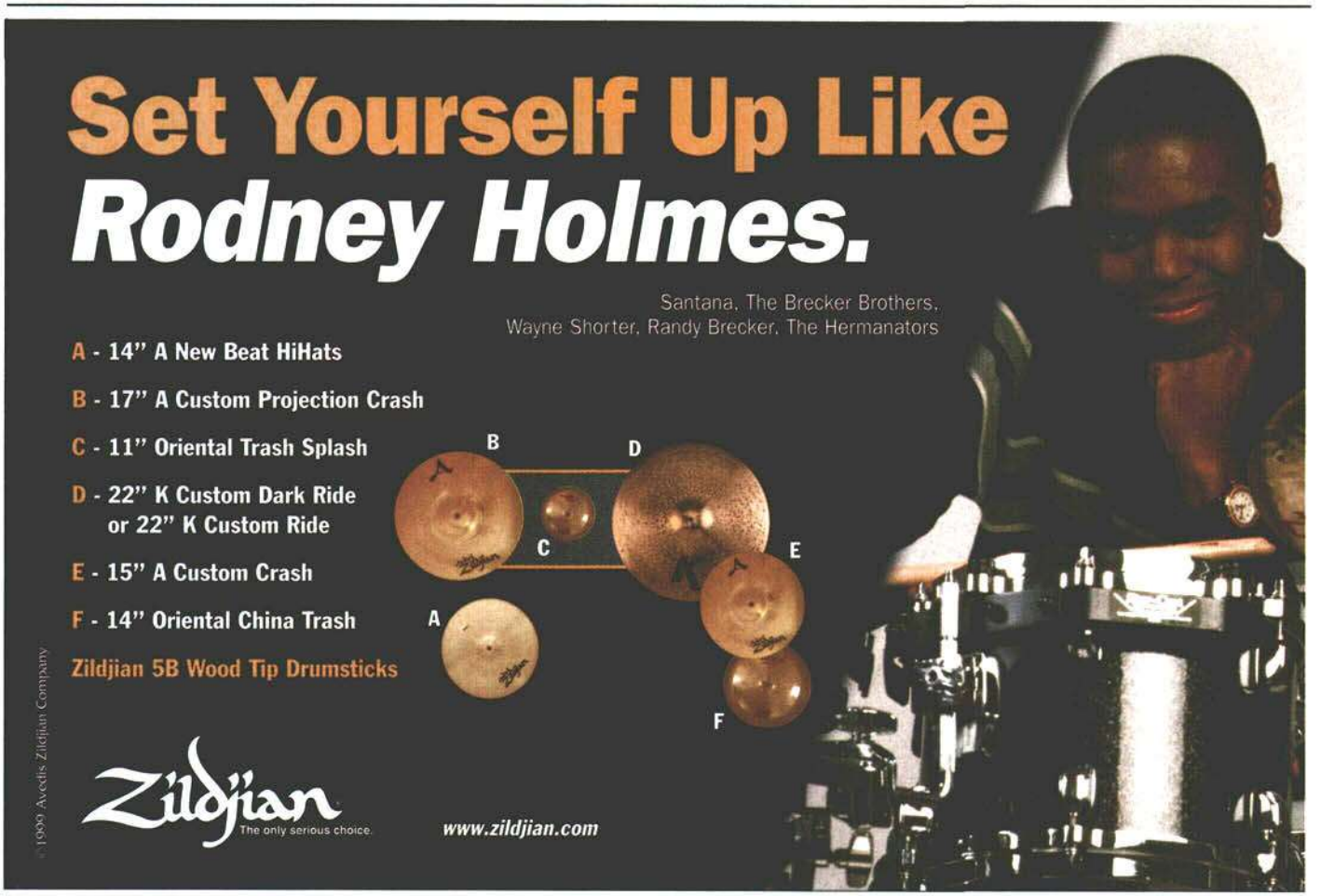


Frank Stranieri
via Internet

I'm a sixteen-year-old drummer, and I'd like to thank *MD* for finally doing a story on Travis McNabb from Better Than Ezra. Travis is one of my favorite drummers. I've seen Ezra twice in the past three months, and they get more fun to watch each time—thanks to the energetic and tasteful drum stylings by McNabb.

I also love Rick Van Horn's book, *The Working Drummer.* It has helped me with several aspects of my playing, and has even helped me build a drum riser. It's an all-around cool book. Thanks.

Logan Korn
Burke, VA



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AMERICA FIRST?

Okay, I've had it! I'm just as American as the next guy, but when will drummers finally give up the notion of "American" drums? What finally set me off was Joey Kramer's *Update* in the April *MD,* in which he stressed that his drums are "American made." I love ya, Joey, but things aren't always what they seem!

There simply *are* no truly American drums, with the exception of some custom brands that are generally only available direct and in limited quantities. The commercially available drum brands that we typically call "American" are usually comprised of:

1) American-made shells
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5) American assembly

The glory days of the American drum companies, when the product was (almost) 100% American-made, are over, largely due to economics. It's just too darn expensive to make all of the drum components in the US and maintain a realistic profit margin. I said "almost 100% American" because pearl plastics have been imported from Italy for years. Ditto for the African mahogany that often comprised at least part of many vintage drum shells. But I ask: What's wrong with that? Don't we have some fine imported drums here in America, such as Pearl, Tama, Yamaha, Mapex, Sonor, and Premier? You'd be hard-pressed to criticize these manufacturers' products simply because they aren't "American."

Let's get over the folklore. If a drum sounds good, play it. If its pedigree bothers you, you're not concentrating hard enough on the music!

John R. Frondelli
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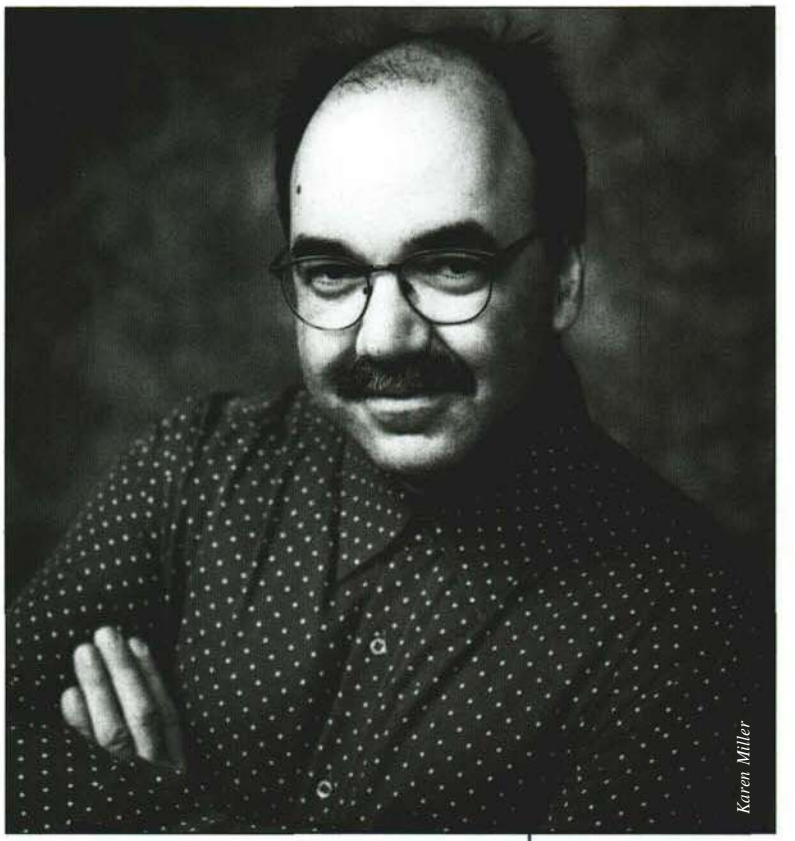
Peter Erskine

Now Buzzing With The Yellowjackets


Karen Miller

The ever-busy Peter Erskine, who recently replaced Will Kennedy in The Yellowjackets, is clearly enthusiastic about his new gig. "It took me a couple of nights or so to begin to get to that place where I felt like, 'Okay, now I *own* the music,'" Erskine relates. "I decided to use a small four-piece kit for the gig [the Yamaha *HipGig* kit], and this has added an interesting dimension to playing with the band. Bassist Jimmy Haslip is a drummer's dream to play with, and [keyboardist] Russell Ferrante is a wonderful composer with a tremendous sensibility for sound and shape. I've known [saxophonist] Bobby Mintzer since high school, and he's always been nothing less than a complete pleasure to work with. The entire band is being quite gracious about my joining and bringing whatever it is I bring to the band. It feels good to be in a band again!"

Peter has also released *Juni* (ECM), the fourth recording by his European trio. While not "swinging" in the usual sense, the trio (with pianist John Taylor and bassist Palle Danielson) plays what could be called "chamber jazz." "While it is in some respects a sort of Chapter 4 in the continuing saga/archive of the trio's ECM recordings, the album surprises me whenever I hear it. I think we took the 'less is more' approach about as far as we could go with *Juni.* At the same time, a couple of the tunes swing more than anything we've done in the past. That said, the trio is undergoing a change of personnel; recently Italian pianist Rita Marcotulli has been playing with me and Palle."

Peter is also on a new video out on Hudson Music featuring Bob Mintzer, guitarist John Abercrombie, and bassist John Patitucci. "The video came out beautifully—*another* great band! What can I tell you? I feel like the luckiest drummer alive! This is a most memorable collaboration that fortunately is preserved on both CD and video. It's really entertaining...and it swings!"

You can keep updated on Peter's activities through his Web site, www.petererskine.com.

Michael Bettine

"Another great band, what can I tell you? I feel like the luckiest drummer alive!"

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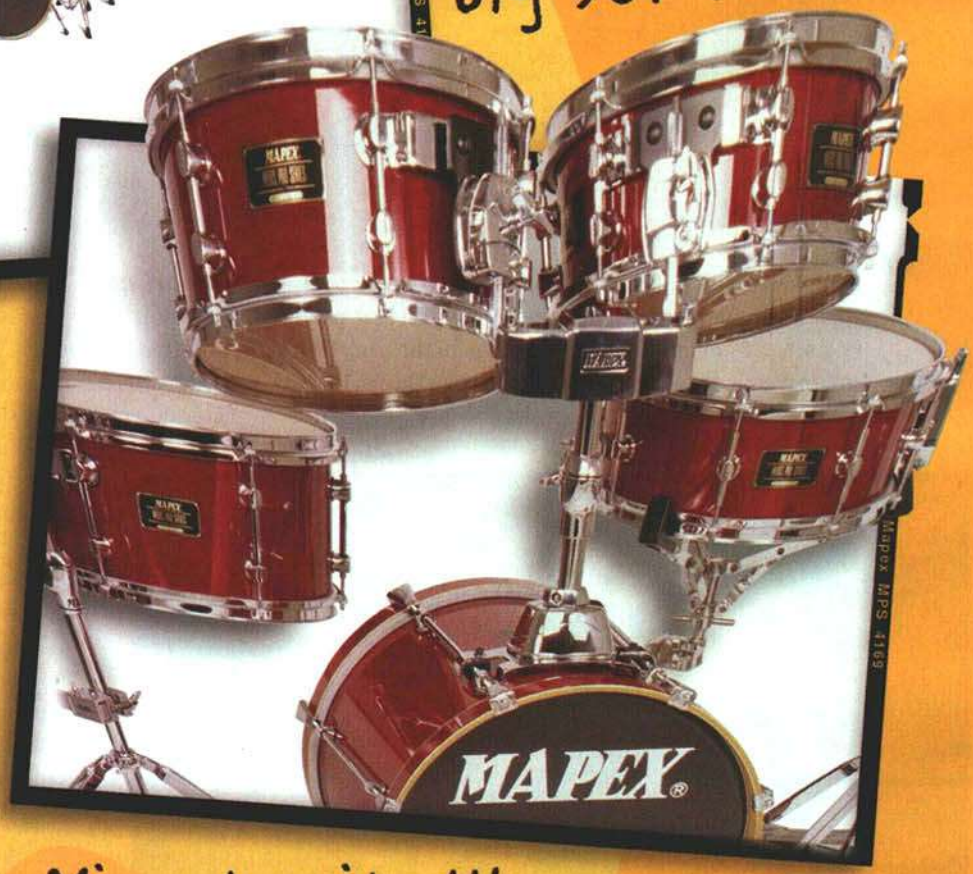

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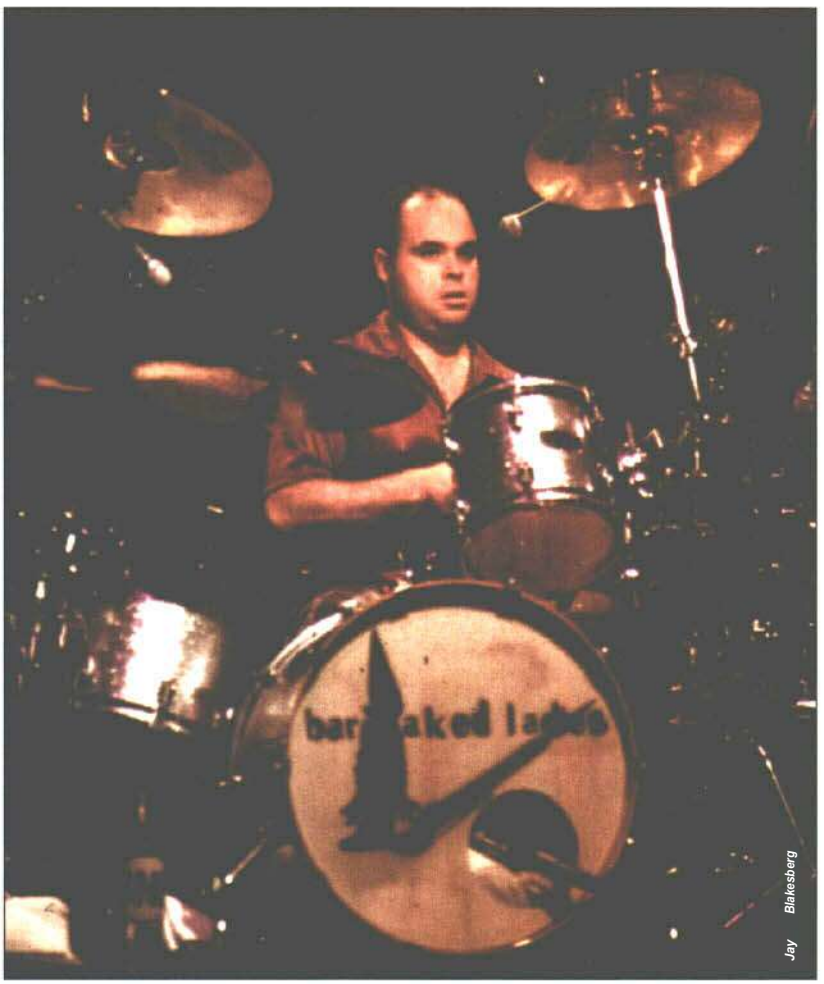
BARENAKED LADIES'

Tyler Stewart

GOOD FOR MORE THAN ONE WEEK

Barenaked Ladies' *Stunt,* which was recently certified triple platinum, features drummer Tyler Stewart playing in a more wide-open style than he has in the past, thanks in large part to producer Susan Rogers [Prince, David Byrne]. "Susan really encouraged me to open up and play more fills," Stewart says, "more toms and stuff on songs like 'Leave,' 'Alcohol,' and 'In The Car.' The crazier I got on some of it, the more she liked it."



Stewart met Barenaked Ladies in 1990, when they were an acoustic act with no drums. "Steven, Ed, and Jim were incredibly funny and spontaneous and musical," he recalls. "They sang great songs and captivated everyone's attention. I looked at them and thought, 'I want to be in that band.' We've been together for ten years now, and it's nice to play a huge variety of material and know that we're not just a one-hit wonder."

The group's biggest hit to date, "One Week," features a great, hollow snare sound. "I'm really happy with the drum sounds on this record," Stewart says. "That big 'One Week' snare sound is the result of being in a decent studio with some vintage tube gear, with good mic' placement and good drum tuning. I've always prided myself on being able to tune drums." On the song's rap section, Stewart goes to cross-stick and ride cymbal. "I started out copying a loop that Ed and Steve had brought in," he says. "We kept trying different things, and eventually it came down to me playing one of the simplest parts I've ever played. There's so much going on in the vocal and the backing track, we thought the best way to serve the song would be to lay something simple underneath it. I agonized, too, thinking that we had to add percussion, or maybe put a sample on top. It took me a while to let go of the notion that it had to be busier, so I learned a lot from that experience.

"We're not out to be the heaviest players," adds the thirty-one-year-old drummer. "We're out to play great songs and straight-up entertain people."

Robin Tolleson

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David Lauser

Sammy Hagar's Thunder

Lightning doesn't strike twice...or does it? That's what Sammy Hagar drummer David Lauser was wondering just after he returned from a grueling casino gig in Reno. "Friends were calling me up asking if I'd heard the news," Lauser recalls. "I was like, *'What* news?' So I turned on MTV and saw for myself that Sammy had split from Van Halen.

"The next thing I knew, Sammy was asking if I'd join his band-to-be. I was in shock. I couldn't believe after eleven years I was getting another chance to tour and record with a 'solo' Sammy Hagar."

David initially got the gig with Hagar in 1981, and subsequently recorded four albums, did numerous movie soundtracks, and toured extensively. So what was it like the second time around with the Red Rocker? "Sammy's always been known for his high energy, but after the Van Halen split, he was really fired up to do something different. We did a two-and-a-half-hour show, covering his twenty-plus-year career—Montrose, old Hagar, Van Halen, and new tunes. The range of material was challenging, even for guitarist Vic Johnson, who can play anything."

After a successful tour of the United States and Australia in 1997 and 1998, the Hagar lineup went into the studio to record Sammy's latest record, *Red Voodoo.* "It was so cool to get off the road and track with a fresh, tight band. There was a lot of energy and excitement when we got together, and I believe the record reflects it."

With the ever-changing music business, how does David view his position? "What comes to mind is the old cliche, 'If I had to do it all over again....' Well, I did, and I'm enjoying it even more the second time around."

Eugene Zane

Independent Petal

Linda Pitmon's first gig was enough to make *anyone* quit the business. In front of an all-ages capacity crowd at Minneapolis's legendary 7th Street Entry, her kick pedal broke during the third song of the set. "The kids rioted," she recalls. "Our singer took his clothes off and started screaming, 'I was punk before you were born!' at the crowd. The club promoter's jaw dropped in horror." After being sacked from the band, Pitmon promptly packed up her kit and gave up drumming.

Fortunately, though, it was the mid-'80s, and the Minneapolis indie music scene was in full swing. Bands like Soul Asylum, Husker Du, The Replacements, and The Jayhawks not only put the city on the musical map, but also provided inspiration to others, like Pitmon, to play. "Dave Pirner [Soul Asylum] and Gary Louris [Jayhawks] were really encouraging," she says, as was Andy Wolff, a local drummer and roadie who made her a custom snare out of a Gretsch shell and vintage Rogers hardware. That drum has since become the cornerstone of her sound.

Pitmon eventually wound up in ZuZu's Petals, an all-girl pop-rock trio that hit the road hard. "Our first goal was to get gigs, then learn how to play, then put out a record," she laughs. The band booked their way across the country, and at one show found themselves in Hoboken opening up for former Dream Syndicate leader Steve Wynn. It would prove to be a pivotal event in Pitmon's life.

When her band broke up, Pitmon moved to New York City and began playing with Wynn and his friends, who included such distinguished songwriters as John Wesley Harding and Amy Rigby. She's currently an understudy for the drummer of the Broadway glam-rock show *Hedwig And The Angry Inch,* and is touring with Wynn to support his latest release, *My Midnight* (Zero Hour). Entirely self-taught, Pitmon sharpened her ear as a record collector and radio deejay, but says she's learned more from paying attention to songwriting than to specific drum beats. Her improvisational style fits perfectly with Wynn's songs and arrangements. "Steve changes songs from night to night, and so do I," she says. "I rarely play a song the same way twice."

Meredith Ochs

Sonichrome's CRAIG RANDOLPH

Drumming in Daylight

"I'm completely self-taught, so I'm a little bit sloppy," admits drummer Craig Randolph of the melodic rock trio Sonichrome. "But I like to hit hard. And mostly I like to make sure the beat is there before I open up and do fills that could break up the groove."

Randolph and his Sonichrome bandmates are busy touring in support of their Capitol Records debut, *Breathe The Daylight.* The trio combines melodic pop sensibilities with a more aggressive rock edge and attitude, making for an interesting hybrid. "Chris [Karn] writes all the material, and then we expand on it," Randolph says. "He gives us room to express ourselves."

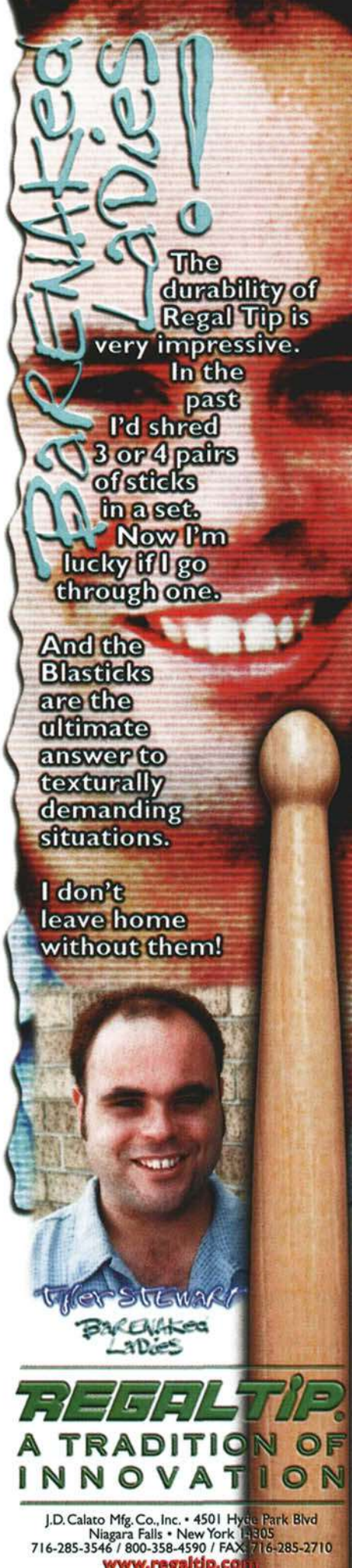
Though Randolph consciously puts groove before fills these days, he was barely even thinking about fills when he joined Sonichrome. "I wasn't doing too many fills because I had faded out from rock and into more of a funk stage for a while. Chris got me back into doing fills. The song 'Step On Outside' is a representation of that."

Randolph says he wants to make a career out of drumming and hopes that career will be with Sonichrome—not a surprising goal for this drummer, who began playing in sixth grade when he and a friend started their first band. "I should take lessons," he adds, "but right now we're so busy. Someday I would like to explore other styles, especially Latin—and maybe some jazz."

Harriet L. Schwartz

news

- **Herman Matthews** has been doing some live dates with Kenny Loggins, recording and writing with Elektra artist Rebekah, and recording and performing with Pass The Peas. He can also be seen in the house band at LA's China Club on Wednesday nights.
- **Carl Palmer** will be on tour this summer with the re-formed '80s supergroup Asia.
- **John "JR" Robinson** has recently been in the studio with Michael Jackson, Barbra Streisand, Clint Black, Quincy Jones, and Chris Botti.
- **Denny Fongheiser** spent the first few months of this year on tour with Ani DiFranco, did some Tracy Chapman dates in Ireland, and performed at the Amnesty International concert in Paris, where, aside from working with Chapman, he got to play behind Youssou N'dour, Peter Gabriel, and Bruce Springsteen.
- **Josh Freese, Jim Keltner, Steve Ferrone,** and **Abe Laboriel Jr.** are on Paul Westerberg's *Suicane Gratification.*
- *MD* writer **Robin Tolleson** is on The Hip Bones' *One Day Around The Block.*
- **Steve Haas** is on Miri Ben-Ari's debut Blue Note recording. Steve will be on tour this summer with Ravi Coltrane, Lovepie, and House Of Red.
- Drummer **Mertz** is on Overmars' debut album, *Highlife.*
- **Stephen Hodges** has been doing some dates with Tom Waits.
- **Lance Porter** is on Gordon's debut CD.
- **Marcus Baylor, Perry Wilson, Mino Cinelu, and Jeffrey Haynes** are on Cassandra Wilson's *Traveling Miles.*
- **John Sullivan** is on tour with Loudmouth, promoting their debut CD on Hollywood Records.
- **Charlie Drayton** is on Doyle Bramhall II's RCA debut, *Jellycream.*
- **Vinnie Pagano** can be heard on Joey McIntyre's new LP, *Stay The Same.*
- **Ed Shaughnessy** recently recorded a new album with The Doc Severinsen Big Band. Ed's been on the road with Doc the past few months.
- **Pat McDonald** is the new drummer in The Charlie Daniels Band.
- **Russ Lawton** recently toured with Phish's Trey Anastasio and Gordon Stone. Russ is on Stone's latest offering, *Even With The Odds.*
- **Gregg Bendian** recently completed an album and West Coast tour with his trio, Pianissimo.



WILLIE GREEN

GROOVING WITH THE NEVILLES

Down in New Orleans, where you need only open a window to hear the sound of brass bands and parade music filtering in from the street, drummers invariably come under the sway of second-line rhythms. Those infectious syncopated beats are as much a part of the fabric of life in the Crescent City as po' boys, red beans & rice, and riverboats on the Mississippi.

There's a rich lineage of New Orleans drumming that goes back to Paul Barbarin and moves forward through Zutty Singleton and Walter Lastie, Earl Palmer and Joe "Smokey" Johnson, Charlie "Hungry" Williams and Charles "Honeyboy" Otis, Ed Blackwell and James Black, Zigaboo Modeliste, Johnny Vidacovich, Herman Earnest, and Herlin Riley. They have all soaked up the city's second-line beats, along with the prevailing Caribbean influence that informed Professor Longhair's music, the mesmerizing tambourine-and-chant grooves of the Mardi Gras Indian tribes, and the ever-ebullient swing of Louis Armstrong. The New Orleans drummers popped all those ingredients together in a pot and put them over a low flame for a scintillating gumbo of rhythm.

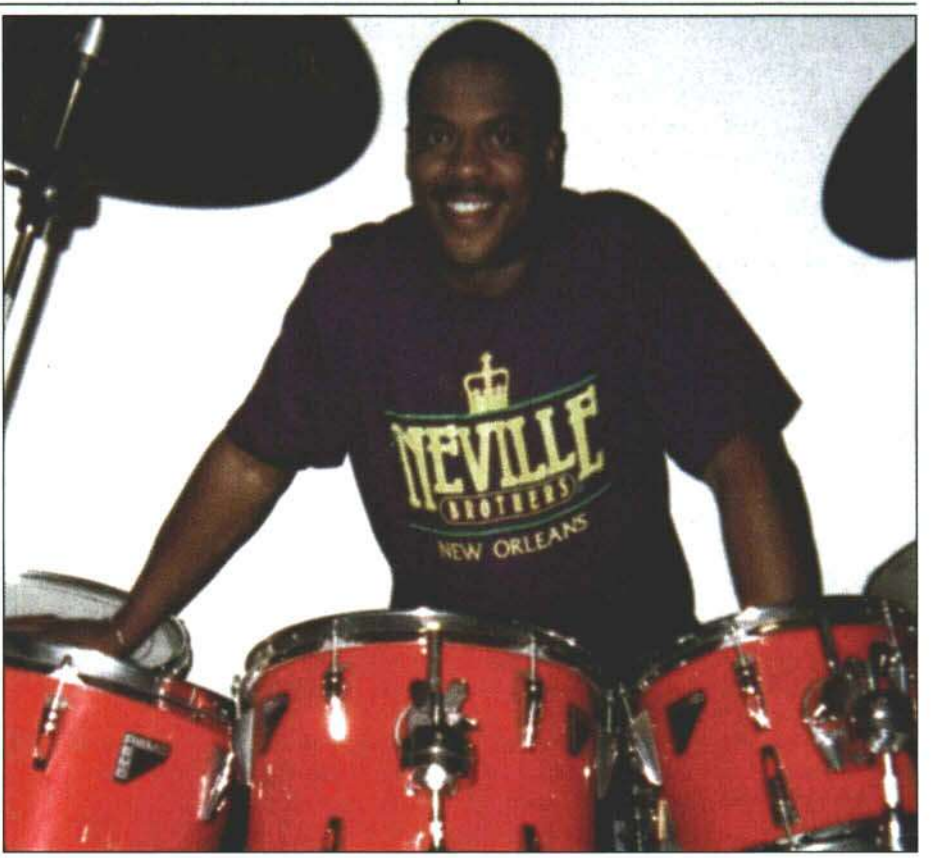
Meanwhile, Mean Willie Green, who has played with hometown favorites The Neville Brothers for the past seventeen years, somehow managed to come up as an aspiring drummer in New Orleans without those same prevailing influences hanging over him. "I didn't follow behind those guys that much," he says. "I kind of went into my own thing."

As a teenager growing up in Shrewsberry, Louisiana, Green had ears for beats of a different color. "At that time, I didn't know much about groups like the Meters," he says. "Cats like Zig, Earl Palmer, and Idris Muhammad were a little before my time. I did hear them on the radio later on as I got older, but I really didn't tune in to that stuff in the early days. I grew up on Grand Funk Railroad, Deep Purple, Rare Earth, and Hendrix. And, of course, Led Zeppelin was one of my favorites. John Bonham really opened up my eyes about playing triplets on the bass drum."

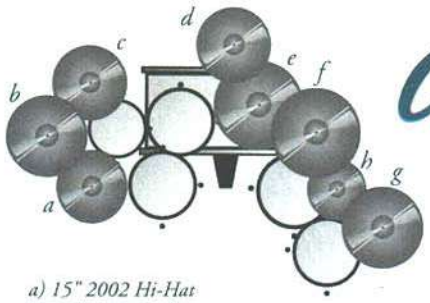
All of which goes to explain why Mean Willie hits harder than most other drummers from New Orleans, even when he's playing a second-line rhythm. "I was always a slammer," he confesses. "That whole lower-energy thing doesn't really interest me. I can't get off like I wanna get off playing ballads. I always want to throw a beat in there that don't fit, but it just feels like it should be there."

Jazz definitely has not entered into Willie's vocabulary. "Swing is not for Mr. Green," he says, with an air of pride. That suits The Neville Brothers just fine, since they haven't once asked Willie to swing since he first joined the band back in 1982.

An especially physical player with a strong, reliable yet pliable backbeat, Green has appeared on a string of Neville recordings over the years, including the group's latest, *Valence Street* (Columbia). Named for the street where the four Neville Brothers—Art, Aaron, Charles, and Cyril—grew up, it highlights Mean



by Bill Milkowski



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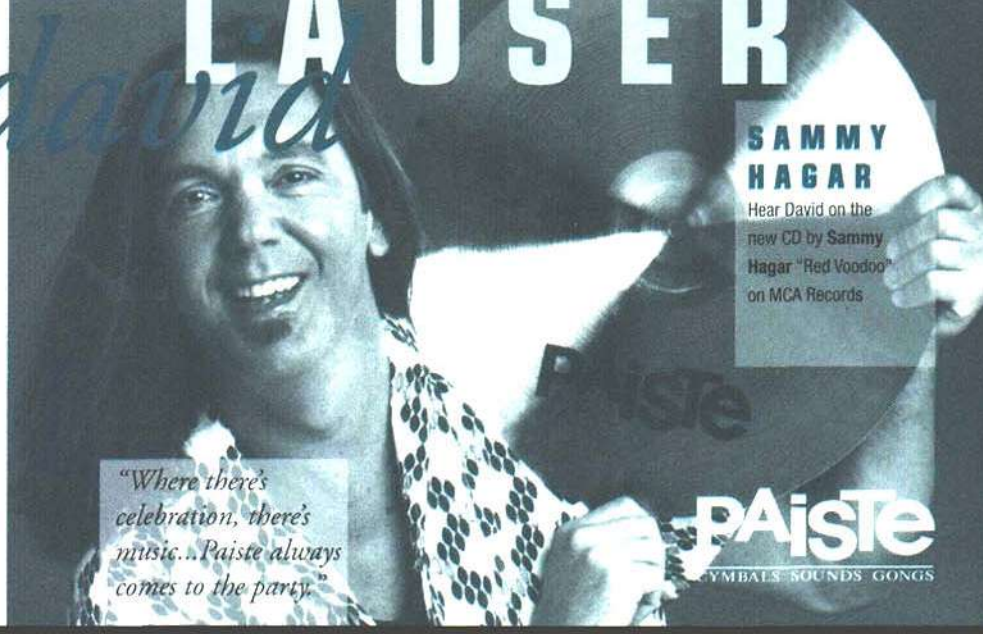

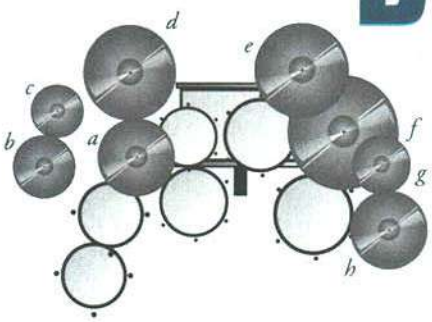

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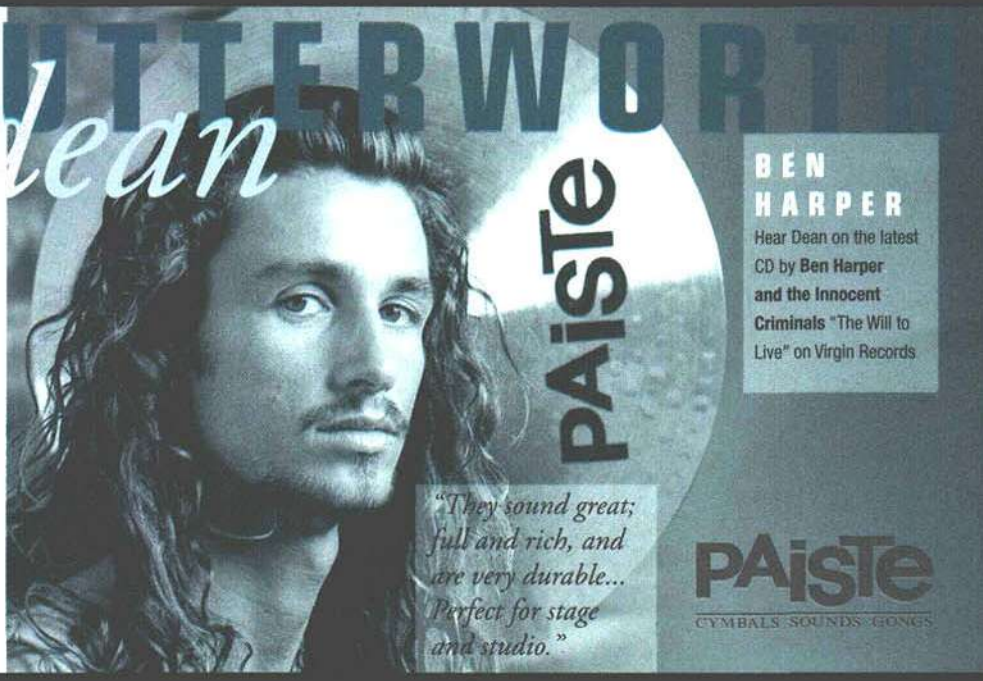

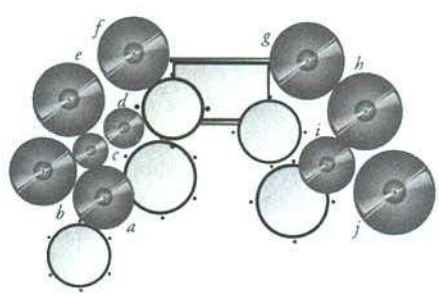

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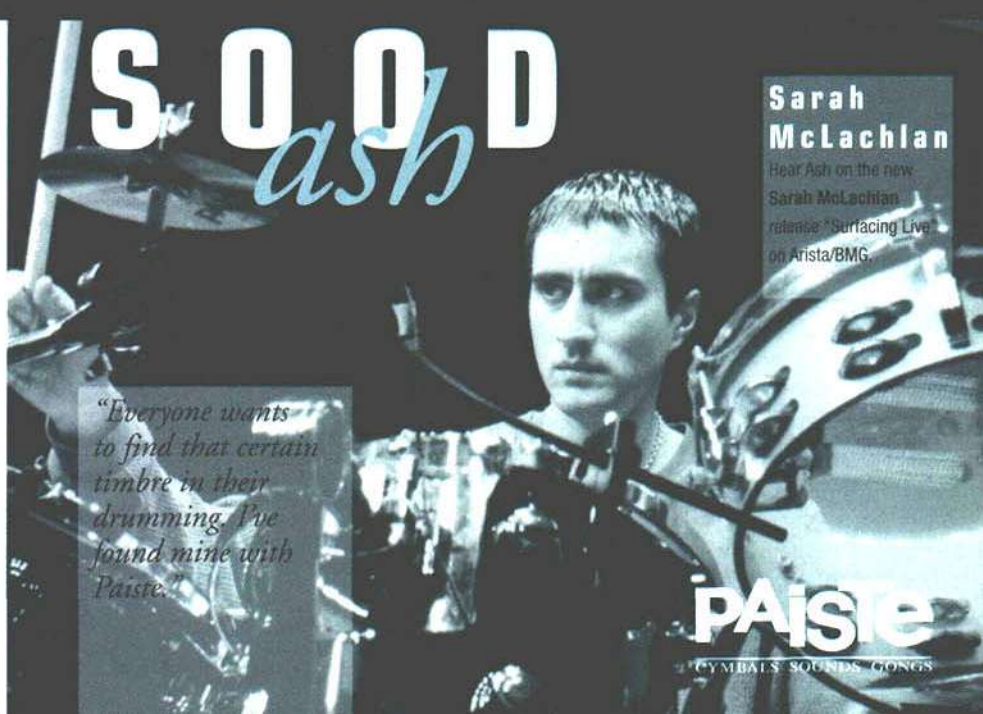


Willie's Mean Machine

Mean Willie Green's current setup is a Remo kit, including a 5x14 snare, a 16x22 bass drum, and 8", 10", 12", 13", 16", and 18" toms, with a Gibraltar rack and pedals. He also uses a 15" Toca timbale, along with a second 22" bass drum mounted over the floor tom—which he uses strictly for second-line grooves. "It comes in handy for tunes like 'Iko Iko,' where I can put that extra bottom there," says Willie.

"I have a big set now because I wanted a musical family," Willie adds. "I wanted to go from the top all the way to the bottom, and this kit gives me the room to go where I want to go. It kind of puts me in a rock-funk and R&B feeling. It's not like a three-piece jazz set or a five-piece for a regular gig. It's just the whole family."

Willie's Zildjian cymbals include an 8" splash, a 22" *Ping* ride, 14" and 16" *A Custom* crashes, and a 16" gong. He uses Vater sticks.

Willie's powerhouse grooves on the title track and on the aptly titled "Real Funk." The rest of the album, to Green's dismay, was recorded in Nashville with session musicians. But given his penchant for slamming and his attitude about playing ballads, he probably wouldn't have been the appropriate choice for the slick, balladic material cut in Nashville, anyway. "The album is not what I expected it to be," says Willie. "It's just too Nashville, in my opinion. It's not enough of where they really come from."

If Green is disappointed about the commercial crossover direction of the latest Nevilles album, he's happy to still be touring with the Brothers. In fact, he would like to see them hitting the road a lot harder than they have been recently. "If it were up to me, I'd be playing every day," says the forty-two-year-old who possesses the enthusiasm of a man half his age. "But those decisions are up to the old men," he laughs. Meanwhile, aside from his ongoing commitment to The Neville Brothers, Green has kept busy by plying his hard-hitting trade in a number of diverse situations down in N'awlins. His latest endeavor is a kind of Crescent City all-star aggregation called Monkey Wrench, which is comprised of players from popular New Orleans bands like The Subdudes, The Radiators, The New Orleans Klezmer All-Stars, and The Anders Osbourne Blues Band.

Mean Willie also appears on one track from The Klezmer All-Stars' *Fresh Out Of The Past* [Shanachie], and he lays down some thick grooves on The Wild Magnolias' 25th-anniversary recording, *Life Is A Carnival* [Metro Blue]. His other semi-regular playing situation is a roots reggae gig with Cyril Neville & The Uptown All-Stars. "Basically, I got four different pockets that I'm covering," he explains. "I got Cyril & The All-Stars. The Nevilles is another pocket. The Klezmers is again totally different. And Monkey Wrench is more of a rock-blues-funk thing. But I make my signature known in each band. It's like having stewed chicken, stewed pork chop, gumbo, and red beans. It's four different things, and they're all good. I have a different attitude for each one of those bands. I can't think the same from any one to another."

Willie defines his signature more by attitude than by any particular stroke or technique. "In those different bands, it's not so much the pocket that changes, it's the character. And for me, it's not like a Gemini thing, where I'm like two different people. It's more like being a good actor, going from one stage to another."

The key to Willie's success at locking in with each of those disparate groups of musicians is his superb ears. "I'm always playing with the band. I never say, 'I'm gonna lead, y'all follow me.' I like something that's solid, that unity that makes a band whole and not like two people standing out while the other three are trying to catch up."

Completely self-taught as a drummer, Willie graduated from beating on cars and the walls of his Shrewsberry home to playing on a cheap kit that eventually fell apart from the sheer force of his stroke. He eventually got a decent Sears kit in 1974 and began practicing in earnest. He credits a local drummer named Larry Mitchell, who played in Sammy Ridgley's band, as his earliest influence. "My brother used to sing with the band, so that's pretty much how I got involved," he recalls. "I would see Larry Mitchell playing, and I really liked what he was doing on the drums. He got me pumped up and made me want to become a drummer myself. We never sat down one-on-one with a set in front of each of us or anything. It was more like just going to see him, stealing a few licks, and going home to try to develop them."

Later influences on Willie's drumming style included John "Jabo" Starks of James Brown's band, Steve Ferrone, and Billy Cobham. Like Cobham, Willie brings an ambidextrous approach to the kit. "I like to hit the snare with my right hand because that's where my real power is," he says. "I want to sound like I'm playing hard, like I'm just taking off. And for me, that's with the snare in the right hand. I started off the

regular way, but it wasn't working for me. After I put the snare in the right hand and the ride in the left hand, it was right where I wanted to go. As time went on, I was able to divide up my whole body into four pieces. Whatever this left leg does, this right hand doesn't feel or doesn't know where it's at. And whatever this right leg does, this left hand doesn't feel or doesn't know where *it's* at. There's a lot of information going on that way, but when I put it all in a pot together, I get a helluva stew."

Willie doesn't read music, and he doesn't intend to learn how. "When I go to the studio to do a session, do *not* give me a chart," he says. "Just give me a tape. Then give me fifteen or twenty minutes, and I got that baby *down.* If I started reading, I don't think I'd be able to play like I play—because I'd be too busy concentrating on where the breaks are at, or whatever. The way that I play comes from the heart, not from the head. I've been that way since I was a kid."

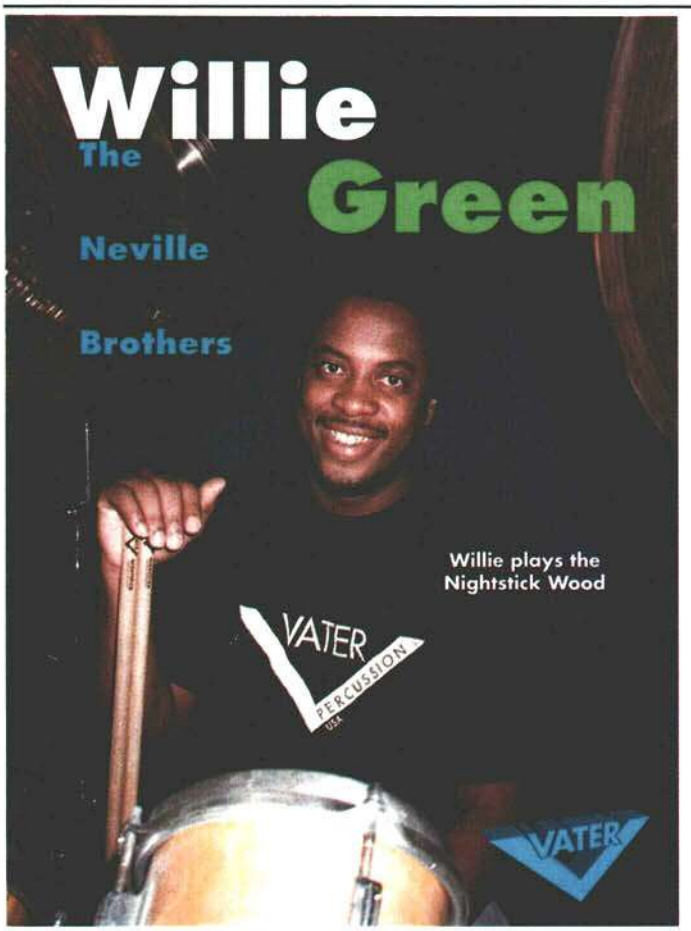
Green's first professional engagement was with Sammy Berfect & The Polished Gentlemen. He was playing with Ivan Neville's band when father Aaron happened to catch a gig. "I still remember that night," he says. "Aaron told his son, 'Ivan, I want that guy in the band.' That was back in 1981."

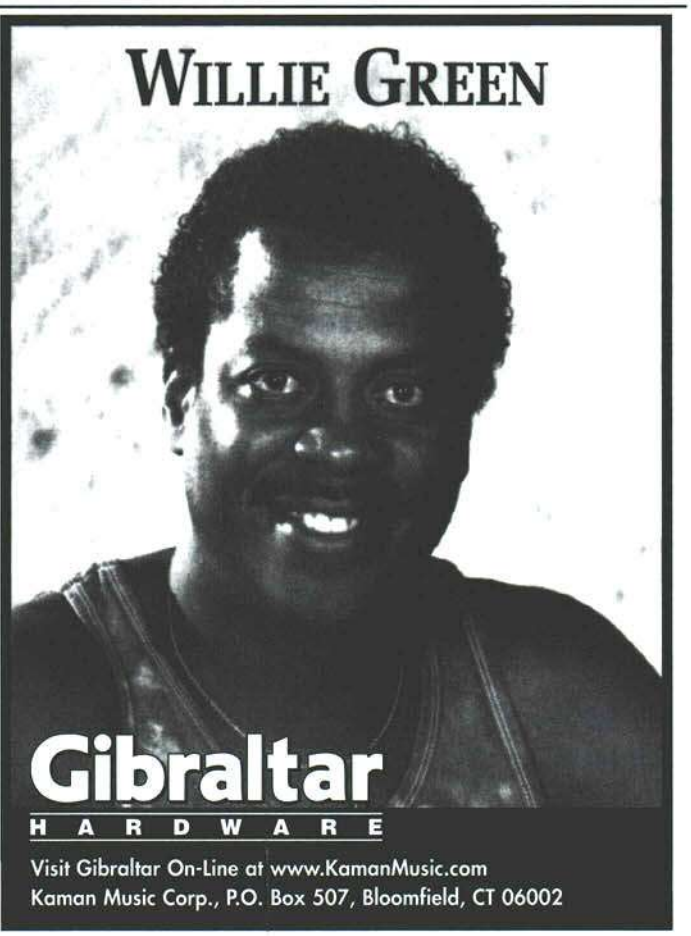
Except for a brief stint with Dr. John in 1982, Mean Willie has been the motor behind the Brothers ever since, both in concert and on record. His own personal favorite Neville Brothers recording remains the 1989 gem *Yellow Moon* (A&M), which was produced in New Orleans by Daniel Lanois.

"Daniel Lanois is one of the best producers that I have ever dealt with," says Green. "He's like a good football coach. He sees something in you that you don't see yourself, and he works with you until what he sees in you finally comes out. [Producer] Hawk Wolinski also did a fine job on *Family Groove* [A&M, 1992]. That was a mother hubbard too. But *Brother's Keeper* [A&M, 1990]...! don't even like to go through all that. [Producer] Malcolm Burns screwed that album up. I think if Daniel Lanois had've done that album, it would've been kickin' *Yellow Moon* in the ass. But Malcolm had ideas about having the drums come in on the chorus. I told him, 'Man, I don't play like that. If I count a song off, I'm playing a song. I don't wait until the chorus and then the beat comes up.' He was trying to duplicate Daniel, but it just didn't work out right."

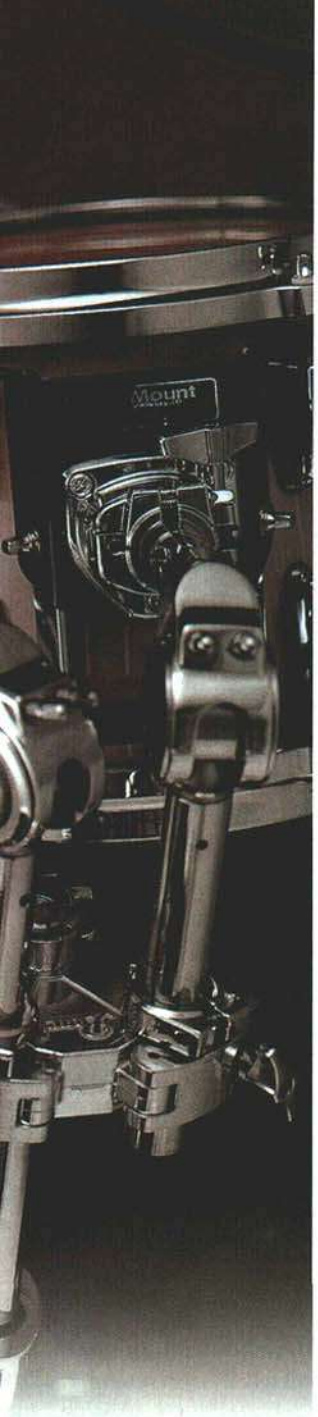
Though Green remains a top dog in The City That Care Forgot, he maintains a healthy work ethic and a humble attitude. "People tell me I'm great and all that," he says, "but I try not to let that affect me. You can never let your ego get in the way. If you walk around like you're bad and nobody can touch you, you're going to be in for a surprise. Because there's always going to be a little sixteen-year-old dude somewhere who will kick your ass. So I don't need to carry that attitude. I just continue to play the way I play. The way I play 'Hey Pocky Way' is the way I *feel* 'Pocky Way.' It's updated for me. It's pumped up a little bit from the way other people play that song. And that's because all of me goes into it. I don't play bass, I don't play guitar or anything else. So all of my energy runs out of me and into the sticks. And I'm putting it down hard."

Which explains why Mr. Green is so Mean.





Masters Series drums are now available in your choice of either Masters Custom MMX (4 ply 100% Maple Shell), Masters Custom MRX (6 ply 100% Maple Shell), or new Masters Studio BRX as shown above (6 ply 100% Premium Birch Shell). New available colors include Platinum Mist and Vintage Sunburst both of which are shown above. For more info see any local Pearl dealer for a free copy of our new 1999 Masters Series Catalog or find us on the web at www.pearldrum.com.



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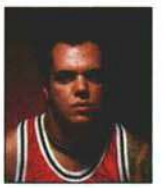

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Mike Portnoy

Q I admire your playing tremendously, and I'd like to work on some of your concepts. I've looked everywhere for your *Progressive Drum Concepts* video, and no one seems to know where I can find it. Can you give me some information?

L.D. Cook
via Internet

A *Progressive Drum Concepts* was originally produced for Rittor Music in Japan back in 1995. It was picked up for distribution for the rest of the world by Warner Bros. Music, and released with a slightly different edit in 1996. Most music stores carry it, but if they don't I'm sure they would be more than happy to order it through the Warner Bros. catalog. Failing that, you might contact Warners directly at Warner Bros. Publications, 15800 NW 48th Ave., Miami, FL 33014.

I am currently working on a new instructional video that will incorporate music from the upcoming Dream Theater album as well as the new *Liquid Tension Experiment 2* album. It looks likely to be released by the end of this year.

Phil Collins

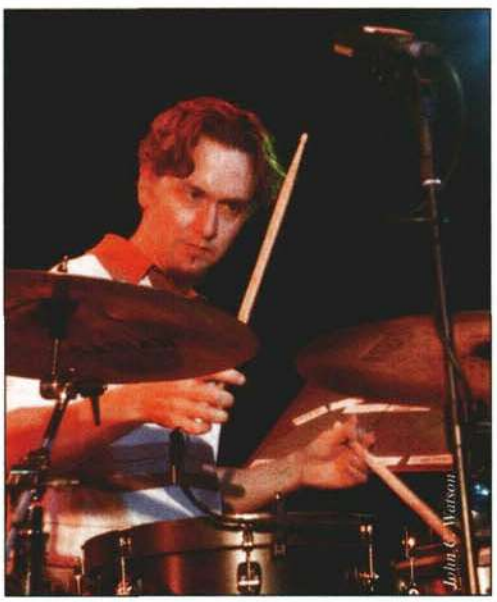
Q I'm an Italian drummer who definitely enjoys your unique drumming. I'm currently involved in a project playing the history of Genesis, covering the whole discography. On the video of the last Genesis tour, on "2nd Home By The Sea," you played your acoustic kit, which seemed to be triggered. What kind of triggers did you use, and to what devices were they connected? And why did you use single-headed toms with Genesis?

Attilio Rovai
Bolzano, Italy

A Thanks for the kind words. On the tour you refer to I used KAT triggers mounted inside each drum, connected to a KAT *midiKITI* trigger interface. The sound source was a Simmons *SDS5* brain.

I used single-headed drums with Genesis because they're *louder*. Also, they gave me the sound I needed for that particular music. When I played recently with my big band, I went back to using double-headed drums with rough-coated heads.

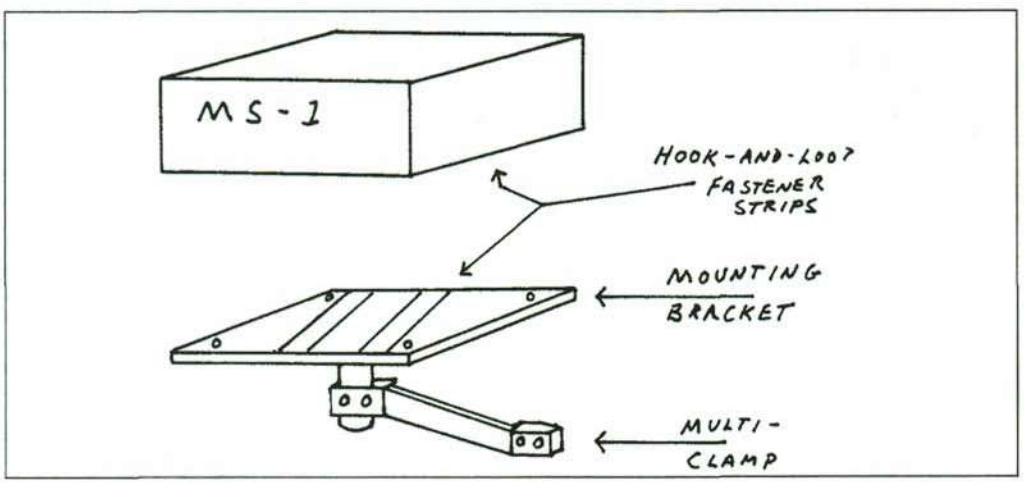
Matt Chamberlain



Q I've seen pictures of your setup, and there seems to be a bracket holding your *MS-1* sampler to a Pearl multi-clamp. I'd like to mount my *MS-1* the same way, but I can't figure out how you attach said bracket. Would you explain it to me?

Scott Persson
via Internet

A My *MS-1* sampler is sitting on a flat mounting bracket that you can get to mount MIDI pads (like the *midiKITI* or Roland's version). My drum tech, Sarge, put that flat plate into the Pearl multi-clamp, and used hook-and-loop fastener strips on the bottom of the *MS-1* and the top of the mounting plate to hold the two together. I've included a little diagram to illustrate the setup. Thanks for your question, and good luck!



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Disabled Drummer

Q I am not a drummer, however a good friend who I have been playing with for years just lost both his feet to a serious illness. His legs were amputated at mid-calf. In order to keep his spirits up we are trying to get him playing as soon as possible. Do you know of anybody in a similar situation, or know of any resources we might use? Any help would be greatly appreciated.

Paul Brushett
Halifax, Nova Scotia

A We suggest you contact the Disabled Drummers Alliance. The DDA is an organization of and for individuals who wish to play drums despite disabilities resulting from illnesses, accidents, genetic conditions, etc. The president of the DDA is Kurt Levee, PO Box 1056, Manhattan Beach, CA 90267, tel/fax: (310) 796-4923. The vice-president is John Mulvan, 610 Beach Blvd., Forked River, NJ 07731, tel: (609)971-9762.

Zildjian Platinums

Q About a year ago, I read about Zildjian's *Platinum* line of cymbals. I have not read anything about them in a while. I would appreciate information on the purpose of the platinum finish, if it alters the sound at all, and why they are not offered any more.

Brian Zakalowski
Washington, MI

A Zildjian's John King replies: "The *A* Zildjian *Platinum* series was introduced in 1986 to offer a reflective cymbal finish that would be visually exciting in any musical environment. The process utilized an electro-plating technique that was exclusive to Zildjian. The sonic properties of the line were identical to our classic Brilliant cymbals; the plating process did nothing to affect the sound qualities of the Zildjian alloy.

"The *Platinum* line enjoyed overwhelming success during its lifetime. However, we were forced to discontinue the process in 1995, due to increasing demands from the Massachusetts Environmental Agency. Those new regulations would have prevented any means of producing the *Platinum* line in a consistent and cost-effective manner."

Drum Monitoring

Q I've been playing professionally for close to twenty years. I've worked in small rooms and big rooms—some with great sound systems and others with only minimal P.A. I've usually left the mixing of my monitor sound to the tech in charge. Depending on the size of the room and the style of music I'm playing, I'll usually ask for a good amount of kick drum, some toms, snare, and hats, and then some of the vocals and other instruments (to help me feel like I'm playing *with* the band). I also wear ear protection, which, of course, affects how I hear the mix.

My question is: How do I get the best sound possible from different sound techs regarding my mix? I'm especially concerned with the kick drum. I usually ask them to "give it more bottom...thicken it up." I want to hear it fat and punchy, but it always seems thin and hollow, or it has an irritating ring.

I know there are too many variables to discuss in depth in this department, but is there a guideline? Are there certain frequencies that should be addressed? I'm using a Pearl *Masters Custom* 18x22 kick, and it's a monster out in the house. So why am I stuck with a less-than-desirable monitor sound?

Chris Russell
via Internet

A We put this question to our resident drum-miking authority, Mark Parsons, who responded: "You're right...there is an almost infinite number of variables in any signal chain. In your situation, the ones that matter most are: your kick drum (and the way it's tuned and/or damped), the microphone, the *location* of the microphone, the EQ being applied to the signal, the monitor wedge, and your hearing protection.

"If, when you say that the kick sounds good out front, you mean that the *amplified* sound (through the P.A.) is good, we can pretty much skip the first half of our list and focus on the monitoring end of things. First, look at the wedge itself. A cabinet with a single 12" speaker and horn, or even with a single 15" speaker, probably isn't going to move the amount of air you require. There's a reason why the drummer in most pro touring acts is given a special "drum wedge," which is a high-powered cabinet with two 15" speakers and a compression driver. It's to provide the volume and impact the drummer needs to *feel* the drums over the rest of the band. (Unfortunately, this is also the primary reason that many rock drummers suffer hearing damage.)

"Unless you want to buy and cart your own drum wedge and amplifier (an expensive and heavy proposition), about the best thing you can do is request of the club that if they have at least one 1x15" cabinet, it go to you. If they have a surplus of small monitors (and the amps to push them), you can try using two of them. Place them as close together as possible; you'll get a bass coupling effect that way.

Speaking of hearing damage, kudos to you for wearing hearing protection on stage! Yes, it can change the way things sound. However, this is probably not the cause of your problem, because ear protection devices actually tend to *fatten* sounds, because they attenuate the mids and highs more than the lower tones. If you feel you would benefit from it, there *is* hearing protection (available especially for musicians) that doesn't change the sound much at all, except to reduce its decibel level. (Check out "Watch Your Ears, Part 2" in the December '97 issue of *MD.)* At some point you may also wish to look into in-ear monitors, which can provide hearing protection and accurate monitoring at the same time.

"Now for what I suspect may be the real culprit in your case: EQ. You ask if there are specific frequencies that should be addressed. Yes there are, and the most important of these is 600 Hz. Get *rid* of it—at least in your monitor mix. This alone will do a lot to make your kick sound smoother, fatter, and punchier. Then you want to boost the fundamental a little (try 80 Hz for starters), and add some beater attack (maybe 6 kHz). In other words, I'd

politely request of the sound tech to 'boost the bottom and top a little and cut the heck out of the lower mids.'

"There are some kick-specific mic's with this sort of equalization built into them. Examples include the Sennheiser *e602,* Electro-Voice *ND868,* AKG *D112,* and Shure *Beta 52.* If most of the clubs you work at use a Shure *SM-58* or similar vocal dynamic mic' on the kick, you may wish to start carrying your own kick mic'. Good luck!"

Duplex? Rogers? What?

Q Is there a Rogers connection to the Duplex brass snare drum shown in these photos? The shell looks to me just like that of the Rogers *Powertone* featured in your October '98 issue. The inner placard reads: "Duplex, Tonecraft Model, Made In USA, Cleveland, OH, No. 6616."

Can you tell me how many of these snare drums were made, the approximate production date, the original cost, and the current value? Any additional information about Duplex would be greatly appreciated.

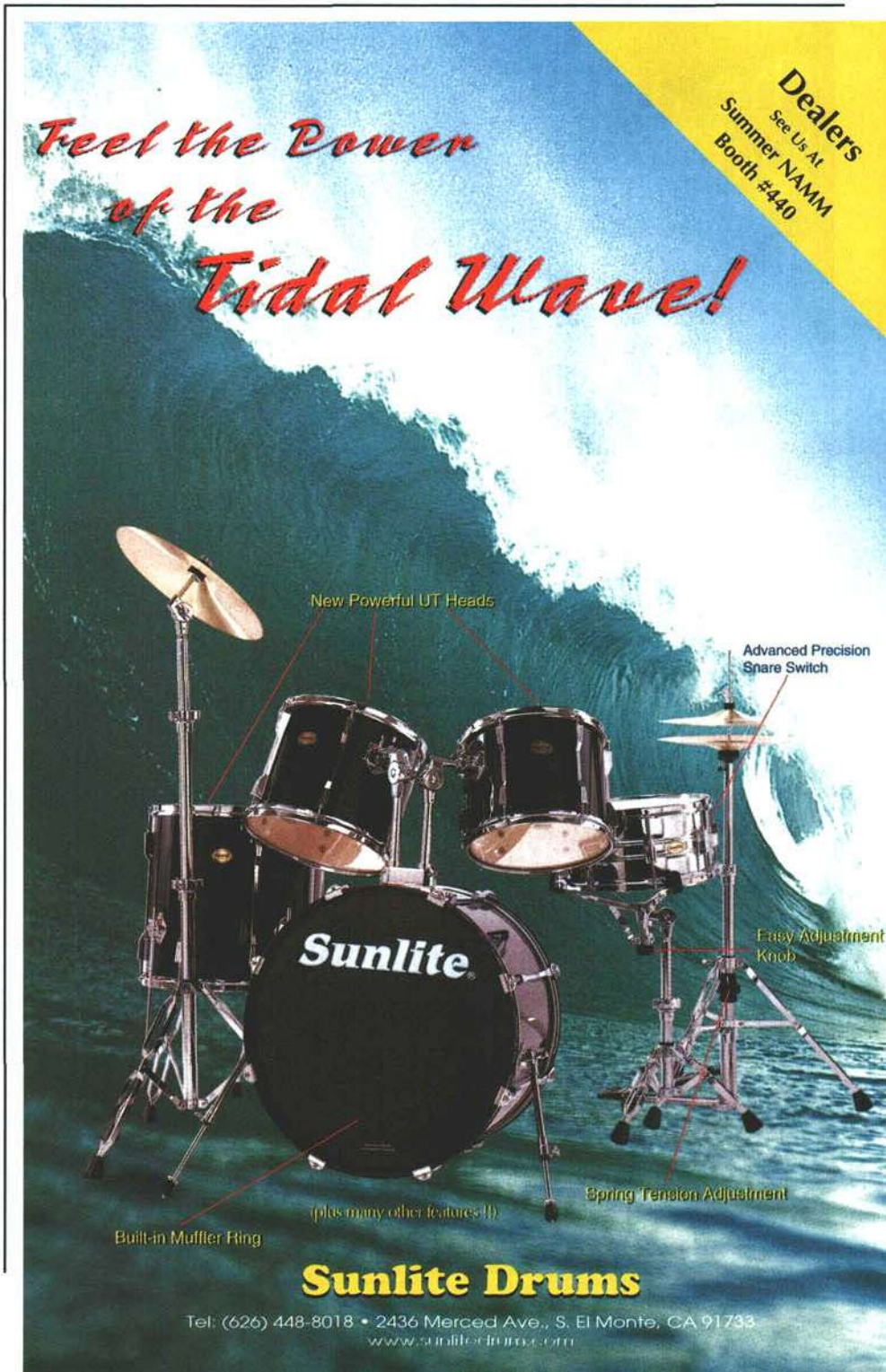
David L. Farmer
Lakewood, OH

A This was a question for our drum historian, Harry Cangany. Harry replies: "David, welcome to one of the great drum mysteries of the 20th century. I can see Robert Stack, in a trenchcoat, starting it off with: 'It's April, 1966, and Grossman Music of Cleveland, Ohio has just sold its Rogers Drum Company to CBS Musical Instruments. For the first time in their existence they have no drums to sell to their dealers. What would *you* do?'

"Okay, now we'll go on. Grossman had three sides to its business at one time: retail, wholesale (jobber), and manufacturer. The wholesale division sold Ludwig & Ludwig drums until that company was no more, at which point Grossman bought Rogers. Thus, while they continued to wholesale most products, they were able to sell their own drums directly.

"At some point Grossman also bought the defunct Duplex name. After Rogers was sold to CBS, Grossman did some assembly of Rogers-like snares and drumsets under the Duplex brand. The shells, tone controls, and finishes were the same, but the lugs and holders were different. The operation didn't last long, and I've only seen a few such Duplex products. However, in your area of the country there could be quite a few, since that was where Grossman was located. Grossman still sells snare wire sets and other replacement drum parts under the Duplex brand name.

"Value is subjective at this point. The drum isn't Rogers...yet it is. I would venture a guess at about 70% of Rogers value. That would put your drum in the $150 to $170 range."



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Kramer's Heads

Q I'm a big Aerosmith fan, and I'd like to know what types of Aquarian drumheads Joey Kramer uses on each of his drums.

Mike Grillo
Somerset, MA

A Roy Burns of Aquarian tells us that Joey uses a *Hi-Energy* snare batter and a *Classic Clear* snare-side head on his snare drum. The toms are equipped with *Classic Clear With Power Dot* batters and *Classic Clear* bottom heads, while the kick drum is fitted with a *Studio X* batter (with a single kick pad) and a DW logo head on the front.

Sonor Stats

Q I know that Sonor is now making a maple drumkit in their *S-Class* series. Does this mean that they've discontinued the original birch/maple combo shells?

Vincent
via Internet

Q My friend has a black, covered Sonor *Force 2000* kit, bought in 1994. What wood is it made of, and is it a pro or semi-pro kit? Is it hard to buy component drums? What current Sonor line most resembles the *Force 2000?*

Daniel da Mata Cerqueira
Belo Horizonte, Brazil

A We asked Sonor's product specialist, Rusty Martin, to respond. Here are his answers:

"Vincent, the *S-Class* line is now all-maple. However, customers can still special-order add-on drums with maple/birch shells. The same goes for the *Sonic Plus II* series. The new drums are now maple/mahogany/maple, but the older 6-ply birch drums may still be special-ordered.

"Daniel, the *Force 2000* line was introduced in 1991 and discontinued in 1995. The kits were marketed as upper entry level. The shell is 9-ply poplar, with 45° bearing edges, and the drums were wrapped in a plastic finish. The new *Force 2001* is very close to the older *Force 2000.* They share the same spurs, tom holder, and lugs."

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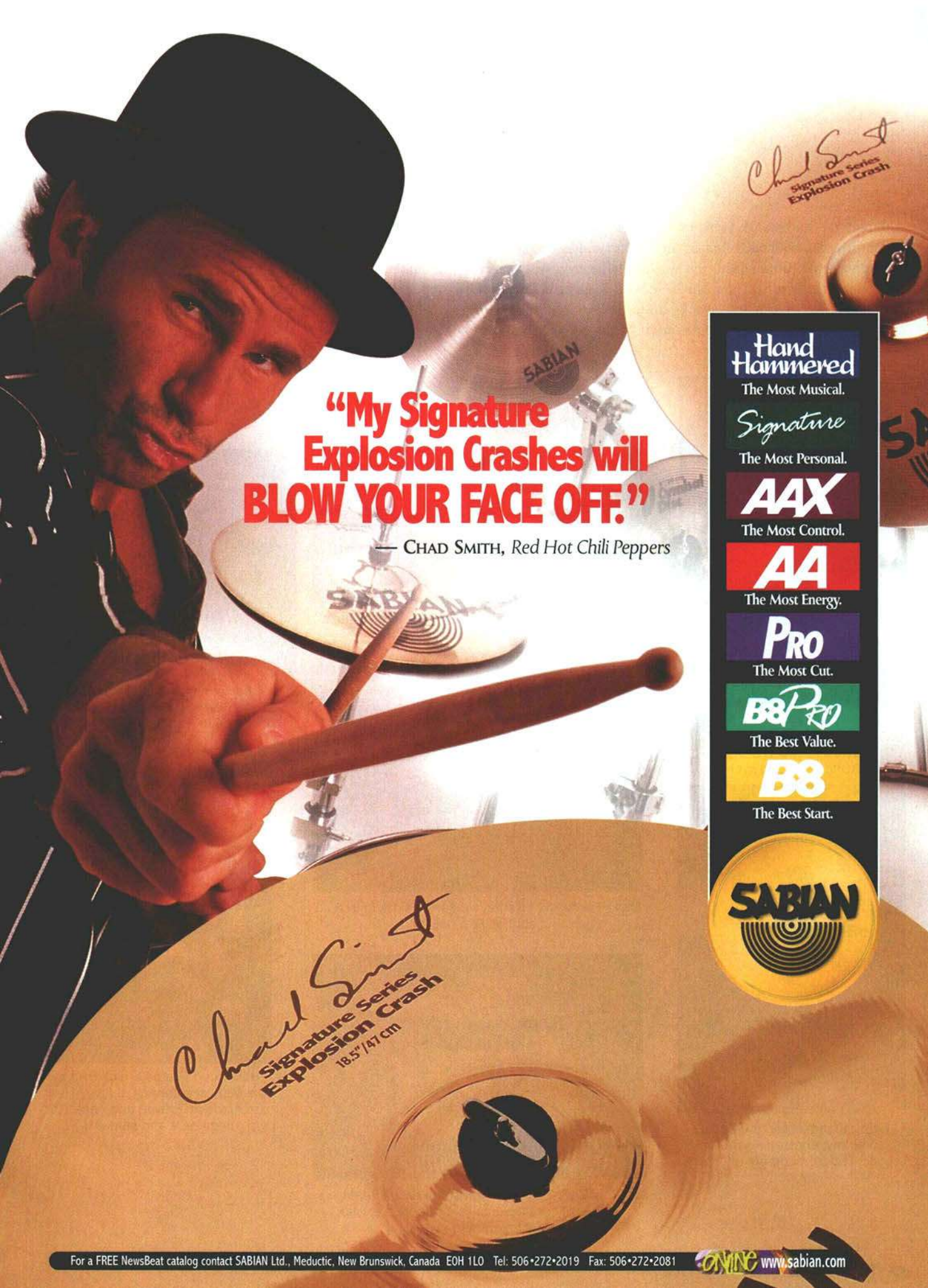
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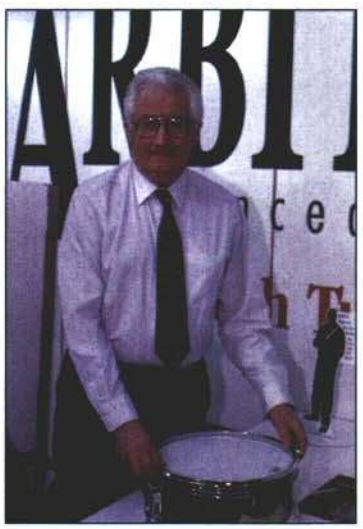
1999 Frankfurt Musik Messe Report

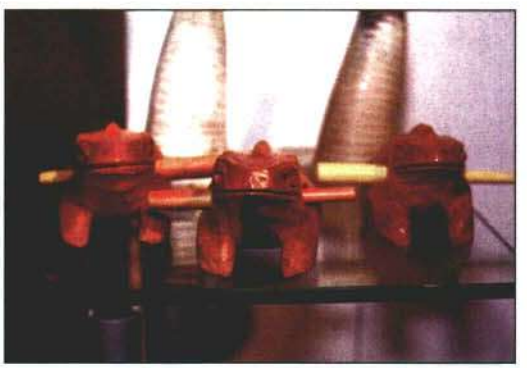
Text and photos by Heinz Kronberger

Although the National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) Winter Market, held each January in California, has been gaining in international prominence, the world's largest musical-instrument trade show is still the Musik Messe. Staged in Frankfurt, Germany each year a few weeks after the NAMM show, the Musik Messe not only showcases most of the product introductions made by the major manufacturers at NAMM (covered this year in the June '99 *MD),* but also a bevy of instruments from around the world that don't make it to the American show. This report focuses on significant products and interesting items from that latter group. (Contact information for their manufacturers follows the photoessay.)



Ivor Arbiter showed the first brass- and steel-shell snare drums to utilize his company's *AT Advanced Tuning* system.

Boing Klangkorper, a German company, showed slit drums called *Tepos,* made out of cherry wood.



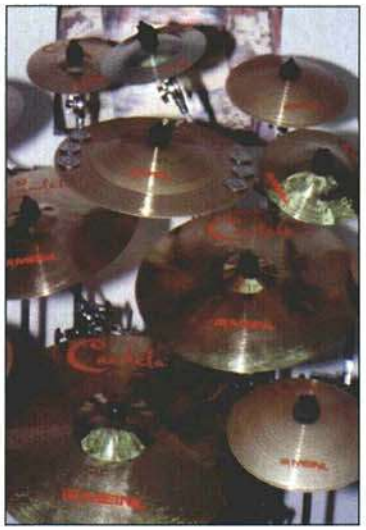
Afroton *Froggys are* made of wood, and create a guiro-like sound.

Daito Percussion displayed djembes made in Asia out of Thai oak.

Chris Brady & Craftsmen snare drums feature either ply or block shells made from exotic Australian hardwoods.

Gabriel Drums from Greece had a five-piece *Handy Drum Kit* at their booth, designed to pack easily in three small bags.

Hollywood Drums are offered by the Meazzi company of Italy. They are made in Taiwan and priced for beginners and students.



Meinl *Candela* cymbals are specially made for percussion players. The range includes *Sizzle Bells, Jingle Bells, Bell Splashes,* crashes, and an 18" *Timbale Crash Ride.*

Magnum *Maple Custom* drums are made with Taiwanese maple shells in combination with German craftsmanship on the edges and the hardware. A six-piece set retails at around $1,500.

Dieter Serfas was on hand to show his *Pitch-Pedal-Set tor* djembes.

Eckermann Drums from Austria had some traditional instruments on display, including bodhrans, riqs, and the *Tamborello.* The instruments are made out of beech with goat skins and a built-in tuning system.

Raul congas from Brazil were on display, along with the company's whole samba line—including timbals, surdos, and pandeiros.

Auditorium Bliss is an Italian manufacturer of children's percussion instruments. They showed their lightweight timpani, which had a really different sound chamber.

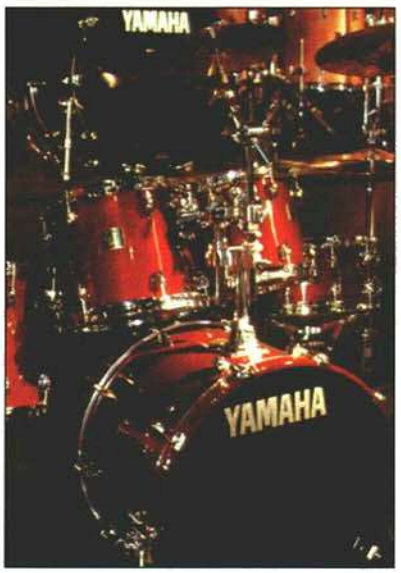
Schlagwerk Klangobjekte had *Hakim Ludin Signature* frame drums on hand. These are tunable instruments made from high-quality wood and skin.

Giannini *Retro Drums are* made in Switzerland. They're made in a vintage style, with 28" shallow-depth bass drums and small toms with tube lugs. The company was also showing a prototype signature kit named for European drum star Daniel Humair.

Thune Trommelbau showed congas made out of one solid piece of German elm wood. They featured a traditional tuning system and selected cowhide heads.

Palm Line congas and bongos are the new student range from PJ Percussion of Denmark.

Sonor *Turbo Designer drums are* made out of acrylic, and were a major eye-catcher. Also new was an incredible rainbow-colored finish in the *Designer wood* series.



Yamaha *Birch Custom Absolute* are designed with the same hardware and finishes as the company's *Maple Custom Absolute* drums. The only difference is the high-quality birch shells. Yamaha was also showing their new DP student range, available in three colors, with a wooden snare drum, wood hoops on the bass drum, and the *Omni Ball* tom-mount system.

UFIP had some custom cymbals in their booth, just to show what they're capable of making. How about this 32" mega-splash tam—or whatever you want to call it!

Spizzichino drums and cymbals are all handmade. The drums have copper shells, and the cymbals are hand-hammered after being roto-cast.

Velez Percussion is a new brand from Germany that specializes in custom-colored samba percussion instruments made of aluminum—like this colorful surdo.

Yamaha's *DTXpress* is a new entry-level electronic drumset. It comes complete with pads and rack at an attractive price.

Overseas Connection

(Listings shown only for companies that do not have US representation)

Afroton
Russelsheimer Str. 22
60326 Frankfurt
Germany
tel: 011 49 69 9730310
fax: 011 49 69 97303121

Auditorium Bliss
Via E. Mattei 8
23811 Ballabio Lecco
Italy
tel: 011 39 341 530870
fax: 011 39 341 531119
info@gitre.it
www.gitre.it

Boing Klangkoerper
Rinn & Cloos Gewerbepark
LudwigRinn Str. 14-16
35452 Heuchelheim (Giessen)
Germany
tel: 011 49 641 65457
fax: 011 49 641 65487
Boing-klangkoerper@t-online.de
home.t-online.de/boing-klangkoerper

Chris Brady & Craftsmen
17 Stone Street
Armadale 6112
Western Australia
tel: 011 61 8 9497 2212
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cpbrady@merriweb.com.au
www.merriweb.com.au/chrisbradydrums

Dieter Serfas/Atelier Berger
Hans Sachs Ring 32
91217 Hersbruck
Germany
tel/fax:011 49 9151 7748

Eckermann Drums
Reinberg-Litschau 69
3852 Postfach 10
Austria
tel: 011 43 2863 7487
www.eckermanndrums.com

Gabriel Drums
42 Plapouta Street
135 62 AG Anagiri, Athens
Greece
tel: 011 1 232 0252
fax: 011 1 268 6041

Giannini Swiss Drums
Aegertenstrasse 8
8003 Zurich
Switzerland
tel: 011 41 1 461 7643
fax: 011 41 1 461 7478

Hollywood Drums
International Sales Office
Meazzi S.p.A.
Amendola 51
20037 Milan
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tel: 011 377 93302012
fax: 011 377 93302212
bauthier@monaco.mc

Juergen Thuene Trommelbau
Strauchmuehle 1
34369 Hofgeismar
Germany
tel: 011 49 5671 2219
fax: 011 49 5671 40473

Magnum Maple Custom
Musik Produktiv
Fuggerstr. 6
49479 Ibbenbuhren
Germany
tel: 011 49 5451 909180
fax: 011 49 5451 909184

PJ Percussion
Frederiksberg Bredegade 1
2000 Frederiksberg
Denmark
tel:011 45 38 105710
fax: 011 45 38 332442
pjperc@image.dk
www.pjperc.dk

Raul Percussion
Brin Plas Ind. e Com. de Instrumentos Musicais Ltda.
Av. Yervant Kissajikian 2753 Vila Missionaria
Sao Paulo
Brazil CEP 04428-010
tel/fax: 011 5511 5562 2014 or 5565 2582

Schlagwerk Klangobjekte
Bahnhofstrasse 42
73333 Gingen, Fils
Germany
tel: 011 49 7162 6066
fax: 011 49 7162 41014

Spizzichino
Via Communale 24 b
51010 S. Quirico, Pescia (Pistoia)
Italy
tel: 011 39 572 400045
fax: 011 39 572 400285

Velez Percussion
Dieselstr. 11
96052 Bamberg
Germany
tel: 011 49 951 6030822
fax: 011 49 951 6030 823
info@velez.de
www.velez.de

Meinl Mongo Santamaria And Woodcraft Congas

by Victor Rendon photos by Jim Esposito

Latin sounds and German design prove a good combination.

A few days after I accepted the task of reviewing some examples of Meinl's Latin percussion line, boxes of equipment started arriving. *Lots* of boxes. Six congas, two sets of bongos, and two sets of timbales! Besides being a little overwhelmed by the quantity of all this gear, I was very impressed by the obvious care that has gone into the construction of Meinl's drums.

The drums were all tested under the most practical circumstances possible: They were played by professionals in a Latin

Mongo Santamaria **congas, with** ***Steely*** **stands**

Woodcraft congas

band in which I perform. The band specializes in straight-ahead salsa and Latin jazz. The conguero and the bongo player used their respective Meinl instruments, while I took over the timbale chores. So the instruments were used together, by a complete percussion section, in a musical performance context. The congas were also used to play rumba (the generic name of a form of Cuban folkloric music).

Mongo Santamaria Congas

We were sent three drums: an 11" quinto, an 11 3/4" conga, and a 12 1/2" tumba. The shells of these drums are made of ash, and are approximately 1/2" thick. Our test drums featured a natural (clear) finish, revealing the beautiful blonde ash wood. Workmanship was excellent on all models.

The *Santamaria* drums are 29 1/2" in height, and have a wide belly that tapers down to an 8" opening for the quinto and conga. The tumba has an even bigger belly, and tapers to an 8 1/2" opening. Each drum comes with easy-on-the-hands low-profile curved rims, six lugs, and a metal bottom ring that protects the shell from wear and tear due to contact with the floor. All the hardware is plated in an attractive gold finish, and an L-shaped tuning wrench is supplied with each drum.

The tension screw plates are held on the shell with three screws. A rubber gasket between the plate and the screw helps to increase shell resonance, while an additional plate and gasket on the inside of the drum further reinforce the tuning system. Each drum is fitted with a *True Skin* buffalo-skin drumhead.

Although I appreciate the quality of construction found on the *Mongo Santamaria* drums, I found them relatively heavy to carry. The largest drum (the tumba) weighed a hefty 35 pounds. The drums get even heavier when put into a bag or case. This can be a real burden for congueros who have to carry their drums to a subway station or bus stop, or up and down stairs. Additionally, the drums are not fitted with carrying handles, which makes it necessary to pick them up by their rims, in a rather uncomfortable posi-

WHAT'S HOT

- excellent workmanship and design on drums and hardware
- beautiful finishes
- *Mongo Santamaria* drums have good open and muffle tones, and sound good in a traditional rumba setting
- *Woodcraft* drums have good open, slap, bass, and muffle tones, and project well in a band as well as a traditional setting

WHAT'S NOT

- bass tones of *Mongo Santamaria* drums lack depth and richness, slap tones lack bite, and drums do not project well in a band situation behind amplification
- traditional rim on *Woodcraft* drums can be hard on the hands
- drums have no carrying handles

Mongo Santamaria **congas feature low-profile curved rims.**

tion. True, the drums *look* better without a handle, but convenience is a major factor in the working environment. I don't think that the addition of a gold-plated handle to match the rest of the hardware would appreciably diminish the visual appeal of the drums. And I'm confident that it would enhance their marketability.

The drums were played while resting directly on a hard floor surface, by a seated musician. In isolation, the drums sounded generally good. Open and muffle tones sounded warm. Slap tones were easy to get, but lacked bite. Bass tones were decent, but lacked depth and richness when the drums were played on the floor.

Perhaps the biggest problem was that the drums lacked projection in a band situation. Congueros who used them on the job complained that it was difficult to draw the out of them in order to be heard. However, when the drums were used to play guaguanco (a type of rumba), where high volume was not needed, they complemented each other very well with their warm, earthy sound.

In fairness, all of Meinl's promotional photos with Mongo Santamaria playing the congas show him playing them while in a standing position, with the drums in stands. A set of Meinl's *Steely* professional conga stands was supplied with our test congas, and the volume and projection of the drums was improved somewhat when the drums were placed in stands and the bottoms were thus open. However, many congueros (including those who tested the drums with me) feel that using stands limits their technique and/or comfort factor. Each player must make that determination for him or herself.

Woodcraft Congas

Another of Meinl's professional lines is the *Woodcraft* series. Again, we were sent an 11" quinto, an 11 3/4" conga, and a 12 1/2" tumba. Their 1/2"-thick shells are made in Germany, of German oak. Our test drums came finished in a dark oak stain. The tuning hardware was attached in the same way as on the *Mongo Santamaria* drums, and as on those drums, the workmanship on these models was excellent.

The *Woodcraft* drums are slightly shorter than the *Santamaria* models, at 29" in height. They also have slightly smaller bellies, but larger openings at their bottoms. Each drum was fitted with a traditional-style rim, along with two metal rings reinforcing its shell. All hardware was chrome-plated. The heads were Meinl's *True Skin* models.

These drums were about average in weight, making them a little easier to carry than the *Santamaria* drums. They, too, could benefit from the addition of carrying handles. However, the only real complaint I got from other players was that the traditional-style rim can be hard on the hands.

These drums fared much better than the *Santamaria* models in the sound department. Slap tones were easy to get, open and muffle tones sounded good, and bass tones sounded deep and rich. (Again, the drums were played on the floor.) This improved sound is probably due to the wider bottom, which reinforces the low and mid-range tones. The drums also projected well in a band situation—perhaps owing to the harder, denser oak shell. In addition to working well for Latin jazz and salsa, the drums complemented each other very well when used to play guaguanco, yambu, or Columbia (variants of rumba).

Woodcraft congas **feature traditional rims.**

Conclusions And Prices

The *Mongo Santamaria* congas are absolutely beautiful instruments—very well-made and offering a warm acoustic character. They're not the loudest drums you'll ever play, nor are they the most portable. The quinto lists for $655, the conga goes for $679, and the tumba is priced at $699. *Steely* stands are available separately for $74 each.

Bright in response and with a full tonal spectrum, the *Woodcraft* congas are a versatile series that should work well wherever wood congas are desired. The traditional rims may not appeal to some players due to the comfort factor, but others will likely subscribe to the "purist" contention that such rims contribute to the sharpness of the drumhead attack sound.

List price for the quinto is $900, the conga lists for $950, and the tumba is an even $1,000. In addition to dark oak, the drums are available in Bordeaux oak, cognac oak, and rustic oak finishes.

Meinl Woodcraft Free Ride Bongos

by Victor Rendon photos by Jim Esposito

All *Woodcraft* bongos are made of German oak. The pair at right are of 5,000-year-old moor oak.

Meinl's *Woodcraft* series also includes a line of bongos handcrafted in Germany using select aged German oak. They exhibit the same excellent workmanship as the congas also reviewed here.

We were sent two pairs of bongos, one finished in a deep red stain, and the other made of 5,000-year-old moor oak with a natural finish. The smaller drum (macho) of each pair has a head diameter of 7"; the larger drum (hembra) is slightly larger than on traditional bongos, at 9". The drums are fitted with traditional-style steel rims, Cuban-style steel bottoms, and *True Skin* cowhide heads.

Standard *Woodcraft* bongos have a block of wood holding the two drumshells together, by means of a bolt that passes through the two shells and the block. Our test bongos employ a new system designed by Meinl, which they call the *Free Ride* suspension system. It consists of a molded nylon center piece that is attached to the bottom rim of each drum, instead of to the shell. This system allows the shell to vibrate more freely.

The *Free Ride* suspension system links the bongos by their lower rims.

WHAT'S HOT

- *Free Ride* suspension system allows the shell to vibrate freely
- "macho" (small) drum sounds crisp, and cuts through amplification

WHAT'S NOT

- "hembra" (large) drum sounds "tin-can-y" in isolation
- suspension system makes overall length of bongos 19" as opposed to average 17", which may affect playing comfort

In terms of sound, both sets of bongos had no problem projecting in a band situation. The smaller head cut through effortlessly, and had a crisp, popping sound. The larger head was adequate in a band environment, but sounded a little "tin-can-y" in isolation. This may be due to the thin skin that came with the drums, rather than to their construction. Other than that, both sets of bongos worked very well within the percussion section.

My only complaint with the design of the drums is the distance between them. The bulky centerpiece of the *Free Ride* connection causes a large gap between the drums, which makes their overall length (19") a full two inches longer than average. So although the new system undoubtedly enhances the acoustic performance of the bongos, it makes them potentially uncomfortable to use in the traditional "between-the-knees" playing position.

Traditional *Woodcraft* bongos come in matte color finishes, including Bordeaux oak, cognac oak, dark oak, and rustic oak. *Free Ride* models come in high-gloss colors, including African brown, amber, blue, green, red, raspberry burst, and vintage sunburst. List price for the *Woodcraft Free Ride* model is $269.

Meinl Luis Conte Signature Timbales

by Victor Rendon photos by Jim Esposito

Designed in collaboration with the star percussionist for whom they are named, these timbales are Meinl's top model. Both steel and brass models were sent for review, in 14" and 15" sizes. The 6 1/2"-deep shells are hand-hammered in their middle sections, giving them a "gemstone" look. The drums feature tuning lugs that are a bit smaller than most modern lugs, and those lugs are placed higher on the shell than on most modern drums. This is something that was done on timbales manufactured in the 1950s and '60s by companies such as Leedy/Ludwig and Slingerland. It's a much-welcomed return, because it gives the player a bigger playing area on the shell of the drum (about 3 1/2").

The complete package of timbales, bell, and stands

I particularly liked the side plate assembly, which holds the shells to the stand. Each plate is welded to the rim of the drum instead of to the shell, thus allowing the shell to vibrate more freely. The bearing edge on the top of each shell is rolled in, while the bottom of the shell is rolled out. The drums are fitted with plastic heads and steel rims.

The timbales come with a sturdy, tillable, double-braced stand fitted with memory locks for height adjustment. It also features a hard rubber spacer, which should prove to be very durable (in addition to absorbing vibrations from the shells.) The stand also features a sliding cowbell-mounting bracket, which allows adjustment of the bell position. The cowbell post is 9 1/2" in height. I was able to mount a mambo bell, a cha cha bell, and a *Jam Block* and still have enough space left over for an extra bell or other accessory.

I did, however, discover some minor flaws with the timbale stand. To begin with, the cowbell-mounting bracket is attached to the top of the stand with a single, rather small nut.

steeltimbales

WHAT'S HOT

- excellent workmanship
- attractive hand-hammered shell
- large playing surface on shell
- timbales have excellent projection

WHAT'S NOT

- single nut on cowbell-mounting bracket can be easily lost, and requires a wrench to tighten it
- height adjustment on stand can't go low enough for seated player or for drumset application
- stand rotates freely

The first thing that happened was that the nut fell out of my hand and became lost! The nut also requires the supplied tuning wrench to tighten it. I'd suggest that this nut be replaced by a large wing nut, for both functional reasons and convenience.

The height adjustment of the stand might also pose a problem for some players. It doesn't quite go low enough to allow a player to sit down (a practice used much in older days and still used by some today). This also presents a problem when incorporating the timbales in a drumkit setup. Additionally, quite by accident I discovered that the timbales could swivel in a complete turn when mounted on the stand. (The vertical post to which they were attached rotated within its assembly.) I was not able to confirm from the company whether or not this was intentional. On the one hand, it allows the player to adjust the side-to-side angle of the timbales when performing. On the other hand, the side-to-side position of the drums could not be fixed. During my testing, they moved throughout the night as I played, making it necessary for me to nudge the drums back into place.

Now we come to a discussion of sound. The "paila" or shell of the steel timbales had a crisp, penetrating sound both in isolated and band situations. It didn't take long to find the "sweet spot" on each shell, whether playing single or double paila. The sound easily cut through the amplification and other instruments in the band. The brass-shell timbales had the same good qualities, but with the predictably darker sound that brass produces.

The solid steel hoops used on the drums add to their sound. All rimshots, abanicos (lead-in rolls), and fills cut through the band effortlessly. I was able to easily tune the small timbale to that classic "high, ringing" sound that we associate with Latin timbales.

brass timbales

Each set of timbales includes one *STB80S Realplayer Steelbell* (mambo size), and a tuning wrench. The bells are very good. They seem to have just enough "ring," giving them body and projection without a lot of overtones. At the same time, they're not so dry that they sound muffled when played around other instruments. They come in a silver luster finish.

Conclusions And Prices

In terms of sound, appearance, and musicality, the *Luis Conte* timbales live up to the performance level of their namesake. I do think Meinl needs to stabilize the stand so that the drums can't rotate, though. Each set of timbales, with stand, bell, and bell mount, lists for $750.

Spirit Snare Drums

by Rick Van Horn photos by Jim Esposito

These solid-wood beauties are the real deal.

Spirit drums are offered in 6 1/2 x14, 5 1/2 x14, and 4x14 sizes.

There are several different snare drums on the market that boast "solid wood" construction. That is, their shells aren't made of laminated plies of wood. Instead, they're either made from a single board that has been steam-bent and glued to form a shell, or from a collection of solid segments, joined at their edges and glued together.

Spirit Drums of Australia has taken the concept of a "solid-wood" shell to its simplest form. Their shells begin as solid segments cut from tree trunks. Each segment is already in roughly cylindrical form, and the drumshell is formed by lathing away the inside and outside of that cylinder until the desired dimensions of diameter and thickness are achieved. The resulting shell is a single, seamless piece of wood, absolutely unchanged from the way it existed within the living tree.

Drum-makers Jim Hall and Matthew Bowden choose ironwood (a hardwood indigenous to the far north of Australia) as their shell material because of its acoustic and structural properties. Their flyer states that the heartwood of the ironwood tree is "one of the densest in the world." (It's twice the density of maple and nearly 50% denser than jarrah.) The wood has "an even texture with interlocking grain," which makes the shells "extremely durable and stable."

Construction

Each Spirit drum is individually hand-crafted. There's no way this work could be done on an assembly line. The wall of each shell is milled to a thickness of 17/32" (15 mm). Overall diameter is 14" (356 mm), and bearing edges are cut at 38.5°. Drums are available in 4" (102 mm), 5 1/2" (140 mm), and 6 1/2" (165 mm) depths. The snare bed on each shell is hand-filed, after which the shell is dipped in hot beeswax to seal the wood and promote its natural timbre and resonance. (The waxed natural-wood finish is the only one available.)

Each drum is hand-drilled to accept its hardware. The buyer has a choice of die-cast chrome steel or pressed-brass hoops. Solid machined tube-style lugs are also available in steel or brass. Snare throw-offs come in chrome or 24K gold-plated versions. The drums are equipped with 20-strand wire snares.

We received one drum of each size for testing. Each was fitted with die-cast hoops, and all hardware was chrome steel. The 5 1/2" and 6 1/2" drums were equipped with Aquarian *Satin Finish* single-ply white-coated batters; the 4" drum had a twin-ply Aquarian *Double-Thin* batter. All three drums were fitted with Aquarian *Classic Clear* snare-side heads.

Sound

A solid body resonates more than a laminated one, and a very dense body reflects sound waves better than a less dense one. Apply those characteristics to a solid-shell snare drum made of a very dense wood, and you get an extremely resonant drum that projects with great power. The reflective nature of the Spirit shells adds another advantage: Sound waves bounce around within the entire volume of the shell, maximizing the "size" and depth of the sound and pulling the greatest possible response from the snares. The result is a very *full* drum sound—even at fairly high head tension—with lots of snare crispness. These characteristics combine to give the Spirit drums exceptional dynamic range: I got great response from them at volume levels from *ppp* to *ff*.

Oh, yes: And because the shells are made of wood, you also get more warmth than you would from a seamless metal shell. Add to this the high-end crack that is associated with die-cast hoops and you have just about everything you could ever want from a snare drum.

My favorite drum among our test group was the 5 1/2 x 14. It could get up almost as high as the 4" drum without choking, yet it

WHAT'S HOT

- unique seamless solid-wood construction
- outstanding resonance, sensitivity, and dynamic range

WHAT'S NOT

- tension rods can be cross-threaded into tube-style lugs
- throw-off on 4x14 drum is awkward to use

had more body than the smaller drum could be expected to provide. Its reflective shell allowed it to sound high and crisp, even while the woody nature of the shell and the overall size of the drum provided an underlying depth. It was a dream to play.

Don't take that to mean that the 4" and 6 1/2" drums weren't excellent, as well. They certainly were. The piccolo produced a glass-shattering crack when its head was tuned up tight, and a surprisingly full sound (for its size) when the head was backed off a bit. The 6 1/2" snare had plenty of crisp sound, but added lots of depth and body underneath. This drum would be a powerful addition to a rock set, but also had the sensitivity to work as a concert snare. Talk about versatility!

Problems

I discovered two problems with the Spirit drums. The first had to do with the tube-style lugs. They're attractive and stylish, but they cannot accommodate swivel nuts. As a result, it's possible to cross-thread a tension rod when trying to insert it into the lug. This is an inherent problem with *all* such lugs, not just those on Spirit drums. But it's a potentially catastrophic one, considering that stripping a lug would render it—and the drum—useless. If I were to purchase a Spirit snare (or any other tube-lug drum) I'd want to order at least a couple of spare lugs. And then I'd still be *extremely* careful about how I threaded the tension rods into the lugs.

The second problem was exclusively with the snare throw-off on the 4" drum. Owing to the shallower depth of this drum, a different throw-off design was used from those found on the other two models. While it's attractive, its tension-adjustment knob is completely obscured by the throw-off lever when the snares are in the "on" position—making it virtually impossible to reach the knob. And when the lever is dropped into the "off position, the knob drops down as well, butting up against the casing of the throw-off and again becoming very difficult to reach. I've never seen this throw-off design before, but I have to say it's probably the most impractical such device I've ever encountered. With all the fine generic throw-offs available on the market, I'd suggest that Spirit find another choice.

(As we went to press, we were informed by Matt Bowden of Spirit drums that future models would be available with lugs that incorporate swivel nuts. Additionally, the piccolo throw-off will feature a knurled knob in place of the current hexagonal one, for easier handling.)

Availability And Prices

Spirit Drums are just breaking into the American market, and will be available in selected retail drum shops by the time you read this. If your local dealer is not carrying the drums, you can order them directly from Spirit, with delivery within four days (depending on stock availability) for $50 over the sales price.

Now, those "sales prices" aren't cheap. But they are surprisingly competitive with other high-end snare drums on the market, including some that are of ply construction. With chromed steel hardware and die-cast hoops, the drums are priced at $905 for the 4x14, $925 for the 5 1/2x14, and $945 for the 6 1/2x14. The brass-and-gold versions are each priced $30 higher. Not unrealistic prices for drums of such unique construction and character.

Spirit drums are currently carried in only a few American drumshops. These include the Ellis Drum Shop, St. Paul, Minnesota, (651) 603-0848, and the Professional Drum Shop, Hollywood, California, (323) 469-6285. For further information, contact Spirit Drums, 160 Martyn St., Cairns, Queensland, Australia 4879, tel: 011-61-7-40316968, fax: 011-61-7-4039061, email: jim@spiritdrums.com.au (or) matt@spiritdrums.com.au.

Each Spirit drum is bored from a single segment of a tree, resulting in a seamless, solid-wood shell.

EVANS DEDICATED SNARE DRUMHEADS

Fine Tuning Your Snare Drum in Increments

Evans is doing for your snare drum what it did for your bass drum - that is, allowing you to dial up a graduated range of sounds from wide open to dampened down. Evans dedicated snare drumheads do this with a minimum of fuss. Simply place the right head on the drum, tension it high or low to taste (a handy tuning reference guide accompanies each head,) and your dream snare sound emerges.

Remember - these are guides. In the realm of tone, nothing is etched in stone - or plastic.

G1 COATED

A drumming tradition, the unadorned, white coated makes the leap from vintage to modern. The Genera-weight film ensures that the **G1** is both durable and sensitive. Just *breathe* on the **G1** and the snares respond! Wide-open, it is your artist's palette, yielding a rainbow of timbres - depending on *where* and *how* you touch it.

UNO 58 1000 DRY

A thin, single-ply head without the annoying overtones or that brittle feeling when you crank it up. The tiny vents, strategically placed around the circumference, filter out *only* the harshest overtones. You get lightning response with sticks or brushes, a velvety smooth rimshot, and a "softer" feeling - even at high tension.

GENERA

The best of both worlds, the **GENERA** is a single-ply head that has the fat spread of a double-ply head. A slender 2 mil muffling ring on the underside "floats" with the head, affording a touch of dampening. The rimshot remains clear.

GENERA DRY

A step dryer in a one-ply head. Evans tried-and-true vents eliminate stray harmonics - and permit the head to "give" a little under your stick. Tuned medium/loose and struck dead center, the head responds with a snarey sizzle that's microphone friendly. Tighten it and the **GENERA DRY** opens-up with a crisp rimshot.

POWER CENTER

We heard your prayers. You asked for the response of a single-ply head, but had concerns about trashing the middle. The *Power Circle* adds durability - and focus - where the stick falls most. Meanwhile, the overtones *sing* around the rim. Unique perforated vents open up the sound and make for a user-friendly feeling.

G2 COATED

We are entering two-ply territory - two 7 mil plies, to be exact. The G2 formula, rapidly becoming a world benchmark on toms, is a delight on snare. It gives you the wide-open response of the G1, with added depth of tone. Pop the **G2 COATED** onto a 7" brass, 5" steel, or 3" birch - onto *any* snare drum, for that matter - for an instant match. The **G2 COATED** is a snare drum head for all tastes and backbeats...a universal soldier.

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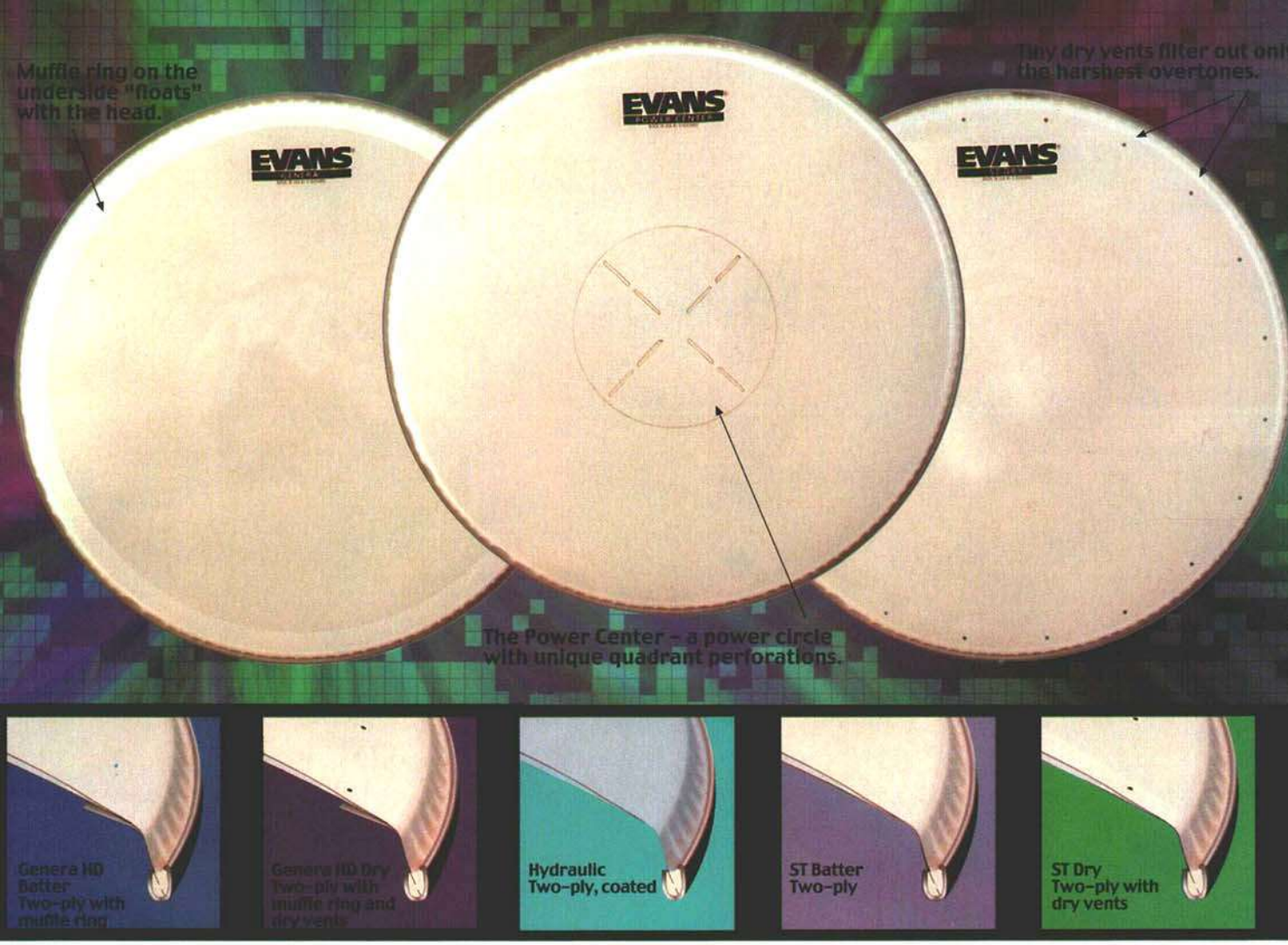

GENERA HD

It yields an extremely full rimshot and balanced response from the center. Lay into this one with the assurance that it is not going to go anywhere! The muffling is just a *tad* and banishes *only* troublesome overtones. Tighten the **GENERA HD**; it will not choke. It *barks* live - plus, it speaks within an ideal frequency window for studio.

GENERA HD DRY

A double-ply head with muffling ring that is instantly both contemporary and retro. Tune it loose to evoke Abbey Road tube mikes or 1970s Memphis. Crank it up and it sparkles with an exquisite mixture of overtones. Great for studio, the **GENERA HD DRY** has the necessary *crack* live to wedge through overdriven guitars and keyboards. Those tiny dry vents and narrow muffling ring go to work at any tuning. The stick feels plain *good* when you smack this one hard!

HYDRAULIC SNARE

What is "funk?" Comprised of an outer 7 mil ply and an inner 6.5 mil ply sandwiching a layer of oil, it has the wet sound that defined the '70s - again in vogue! A durable head, with a new brush coating, the **HYDRAULIC SNARE** has a short sustain that emphasizes the fundamental tone of your drum. A blanket cure for troublesome snare drums and reflective rooms, this Evans veteran is back in the high life.

ST

The **ST** *buries* other two-ply heads in its category. Packing two layers of 7.5 mil film, we are talking serious protection! Ah, but the *sound*...the **ST** promotes a full-bandwidth rimshot. It has all the volume and ring you could ask for, yet responds to the flick of a fingernail. For butt-end *or* tip players!

ST DRY

The same two plies, but what a difference those vents make! The **ST DRY** has the volume and aggression of the ST, but with the higher harmonics brushed from the picture. It cuts through with rich tone. Ghost notes articulate beautifully, while the rimshot is lightly gated. Rock-hard, it holds its tone. Crack it fearlessly and the vents promote an *organic* sensation - almost "aged-in" like a vintage ride cymbal.

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CHAD SMITH

Serving Up A New Red Hot Brew

Appearances can be deceiving; Chad Smith is proof of that. The Red Hot Chili Peppers are known as the quintessential sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll band. And at times, their individual profiles have fit the image. But for Smith, that image might be more fiction than fact. Don't misunderstand: Chad's definitely no choirboy. But this drummer *is* a fairly normal, albeit slightly eccentric, individual.

Story by Robyn Flans

Photos by Morrison+Wulffraat

"Some people think I'm the guy hanging out of the limo with the Jack Daniels and the needle dangling out of my arm," Smith says, calmly seated in his lovely LA home. "We're definitely known for that—we've had drugs in our band and people have died. But believe it or not, I'm the normal guy in the band. Sure, we like to have fun, but there's nothing malicious intended. I've done some things in the past that might be construed by more conservative types as questionable. But you have to remember that, when people see an actor on TV who always plays the bad guy, they think he must be a jerk.

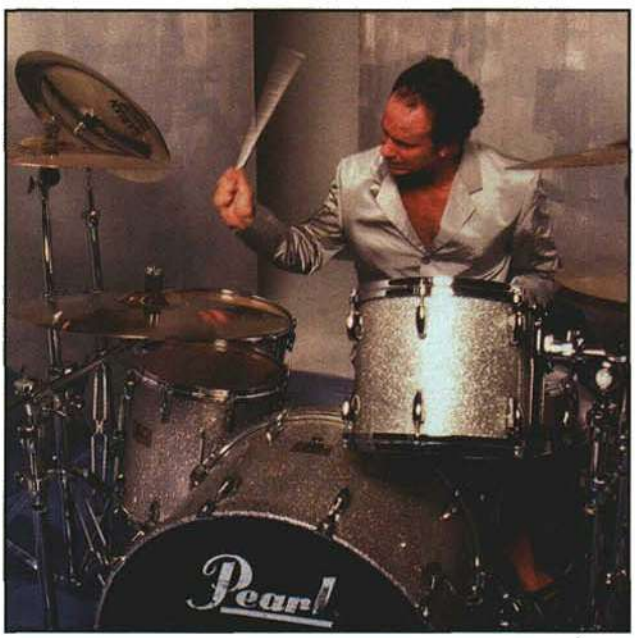
"We're entertainers putting on a show," Smith asserts. "We're serious about our music. But if we go on stage and have flames shooting out of our heads, it doesn't mean I go home at night and shoot flames out of my head while I'm drinking my Pepsi."

Smith keeps the band grounded, musically *and* personally. Although he enjoys his wild moments, bandmembers know he's the one they can always count on. Chad is the foundation for The Chili Peppers' amalgamation of musical ingredients. He analogizes his role as being the force that stirs the pot, digging deep into the stew to dish up the bottom.

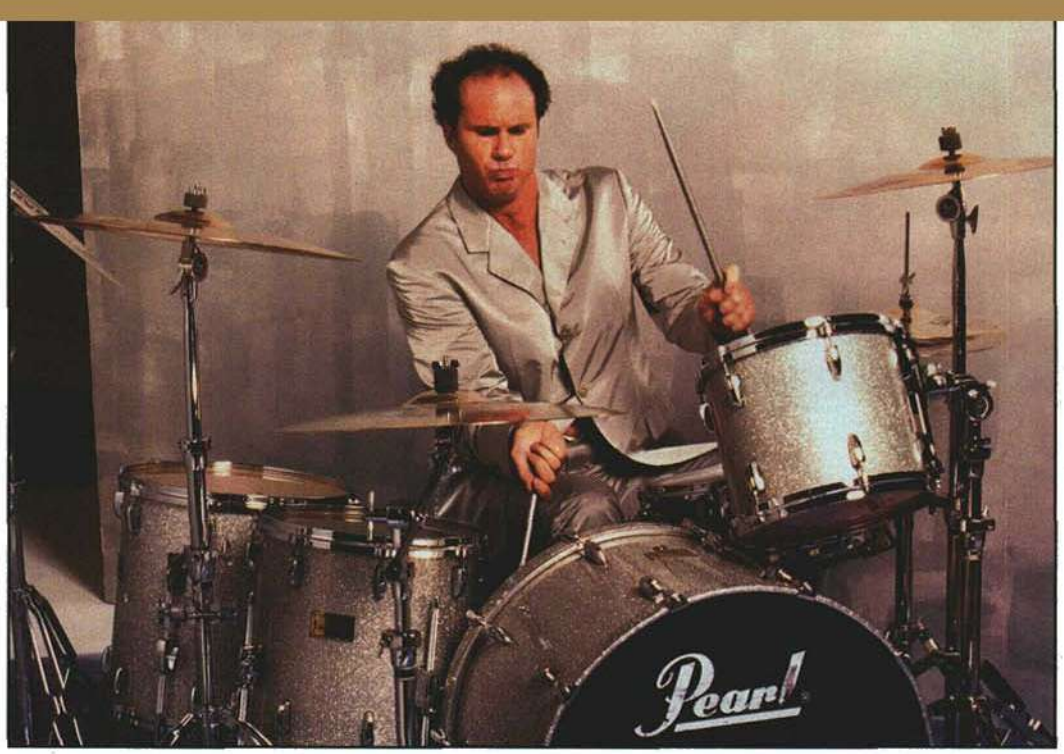
While he's had no real formal training to speak of, Smith's personal drumming style pays homage to such past masters as Gene Krupa and Jo Jones, mixed with a helping of rock stylists John Bonham, Keith Moon, and Mitch Mitchell. Also heavy in the Smith sauce are funkmeisters Greg Errico, Clyde Stubblefield, and Zigaboo Modeliste.

But while Chad shies away from the title of funk drummer, he gratefully accepts the appellation of "funkiest rock drummer around." Mostly he's proud that he can play the right thing for the band's varied songs, which is a challenge considering there are few boundaries to The Chili Peppers' creativity.

This barrier-breaking is obvious on the band's new release, *Californication,* which marks the return of guitarist John Frusciante. Once again, The Chili Peppers cook up a zippy gumbo varied in flavor and rich with taste. And there's Chad Smith, right in the middle, serving it up.



RF: Can you tell us about the creative process in the band and where the material comes from?
CS: A lot of the songs come out of jams. We started writing for this album last June, in Flea's hot garage. We put our gear in there and just started playing.
RF: Does somebody say, "I have this idea, I have this riff, I have this pattern in mind"?
CS: There isn't any one way a song comes together. Sometimes somebody will have a riff, like John will have something he was playing at home, he'll bring it in, and say, "I have this part. What do you guys think?" And other times it's just us getting together and playing off the top of our heads. Sometimes it's great and turns



into a song like "I Like Dirt." Other times it sucks and we'll just go on to something else.

RF: At what point do you abandon the process?

CS: After about twenty minutes of playing the same groove it will probably fizzle out if it's not happening. Nobody will really say anything. If we like it, we'll say, "Let's record this," and if not we'll say, "Hey, let's work on that thing we were doing yesterday."

"Dirt" came really early on in the writing process. To me it sounded like a James Brown-ish kind of tight funk thing, and I came up with a kick/snare pattern that worked. Then we threw in some stops.

A lot of times the first thing you play, the gut feeling you go for, is the best. Yet everybody in our band makes suggestions for the other parts. You can never rule out any input because you never know what's going to metamorphose into something great. It might be, "That's cool, but why don't you try this," or "Do something on toms," or "What about some loud, ringy, washy cymbals." Everybody does make suggestions, but lots of times it will be my gut feeling of how it should sound from what those guys are playing and what will best complement the music.

RF: Did the bass or guitar dictate your idea on "Dirt"?

CS: Probably more the bass on that song, certainly in the verses. It's not a song where I'm playing really hard. This lent itself to my being able to play something a little busier, funkier, and tighter, so I could get away with a little more snare and hi-hat things.

RF: What was the evolution of "Californication"?

CS: "Californication" was one of the earliest things we had. We wrestled with it, even hated it, but it turned out to be one of our best things. Anthony had the words early on and we had some music to it. We struggled with the arrangement and the parts because it was kinda boring and no one was really excited about it, except Anthony. We were already

into pre-production with Rick [Rubin] when John took the words home and came up with a simple guitar part for it. He brought it to the next rehearsal and it was completely different. He's so good at that.

When John quit the band years ago he got into drugs really bad and hit bottom, but now he's come back to the band so focused. He's been instrumental in the way this record sounds. Once he came in with a couple of new parts for "Californication" we were able to turn it into one of the best songs on the record.

RF: What about "Get On Top"?

CS: That was another jam. I wish I could explain the creating of the parts better, but it just comes from years of listening. It's something that is so difficult to put into words. There's no pre-conceived idea with us. It's not, "We're going to try to write a funky song today." It's how we feel on that day. Before I came to rehearsal, I mowed the lawn, washed my car, and bought a six-pack of beer. Flea probably dropped his kid off at school, read a book, and talked on the phone. What everybody does just gets brought into the rehearsal room. It's really hard to try to explain it without sounding like an airhead—"Duh, I don't know, I just come up with it. We just jam and if it's good, we record it."

RF: Did your part for "Get On Top" come from the bass part?

CS: No. It's so bass-heavy because there are actually two basses on it, so bass players will be pulling their hair out trying to figure out how to do that. But John had the original wah-wah rhythm guitar part and Flea and I put our parts on top of it.

RF: I suspect that when you and Flea went to add your parts, there was no conversation about it.

CS: There's rarely any conversation. We've been playing together for ten years, so we just fell in. John's part is kind of busy, but very rhythmic, and I just picked out little things that Flea was playing to accent. I wanted to choose things that would propel the groove yet still leave enough space so everybody else's part could speak.

RF: Is it a conscious decision or just a natural inclination to insert your little ghost notes?

CS: I'm a ghoster from way back.

RF: Do you remember what started that?

CS: I'm a big John Bonham fan, and he was a ghoster. I play so many ghost notes on this record that it could conjure up spirits. You can play simply, which I try to do, and when you add ghost notes it kind of rounds out the groove a little bit so it doesn't sound so stiff. It's not a conscious thing to put them in, it's just a personality thing. It just makes things more funky and fatter, and rounds out the groove a little more in between the backbeats.

RF: Do you actually recall when and how you incorporated that into your style?

"I'm a ghoster from way back. I play so many ghost notes on this record that it could conjure up spirits."

CHAD'S BLASTERS & EXPLOSIONS

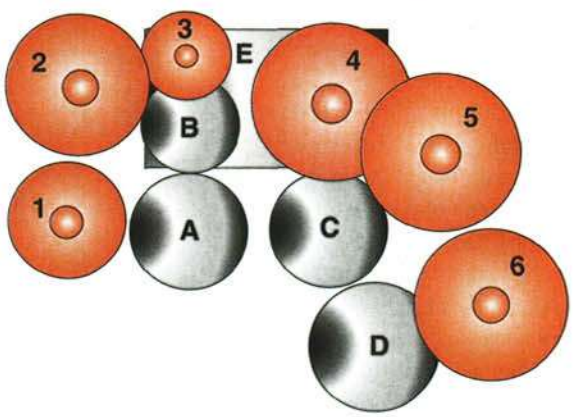
Drumset: Pearl *Masters Custom MMX*
A. 5x14 *Chad Smith Signature* snare (black nickel-plated steel) or Brady 5 1/2x 14 jarrah wood model
B. 10x12 tom
C. 14x14 floor tom
D. 16x16 floor tom
E. 16x24 bass drum

Hardware: all Pearl, except for DW hi-hat and bass drum pedal

Sticks: Vater *Chad Funkblasters* (signature) model

Cymbals: Sabian (all with brilliant finish)
1. 14" hi-hats *(Flat Hats* top, *AA* top for bottom)
2. 18 1/2" *Chad Smith Explosion* crash
3. 10" AA splash
4. 20" AA *Rock* ride
5. 20 1/2" *Chad Smith Explosion* crash
6. 19" China

Heads: Remo coated *CS* on snare with *Ambassador* on snare-side, clear *Emperors* on tops of toms with clear *Ambassadors* underneath, clear *Powerstroke 3* on bass drum batter



CS: It probably came from listening to the records that influenced me when I was young. My brother is a couple of years older and he was into Led Zeppelin, Jimi Hendrix, The Who, Black Sabbath. To me, Sabbath's drummer, Bill Ward, is like a hard-hitting jazz drummer. I saw them at the Forum and they were awesome! But all of that must have just seeped into my subconscious. I played along with all those records.

RF: You had a kit set up in your house as a kid?

CS: I would set up in the house, the garage, or the basement, where it was nice and loud, and I could annoy the neighbors. My mom was very supportive. She'd call to me, "I'm going shopping now. It's a good time to practice if you want." I'd bang away with the headphones on and rock out like I was playing with Zeppelin or Hendrix.

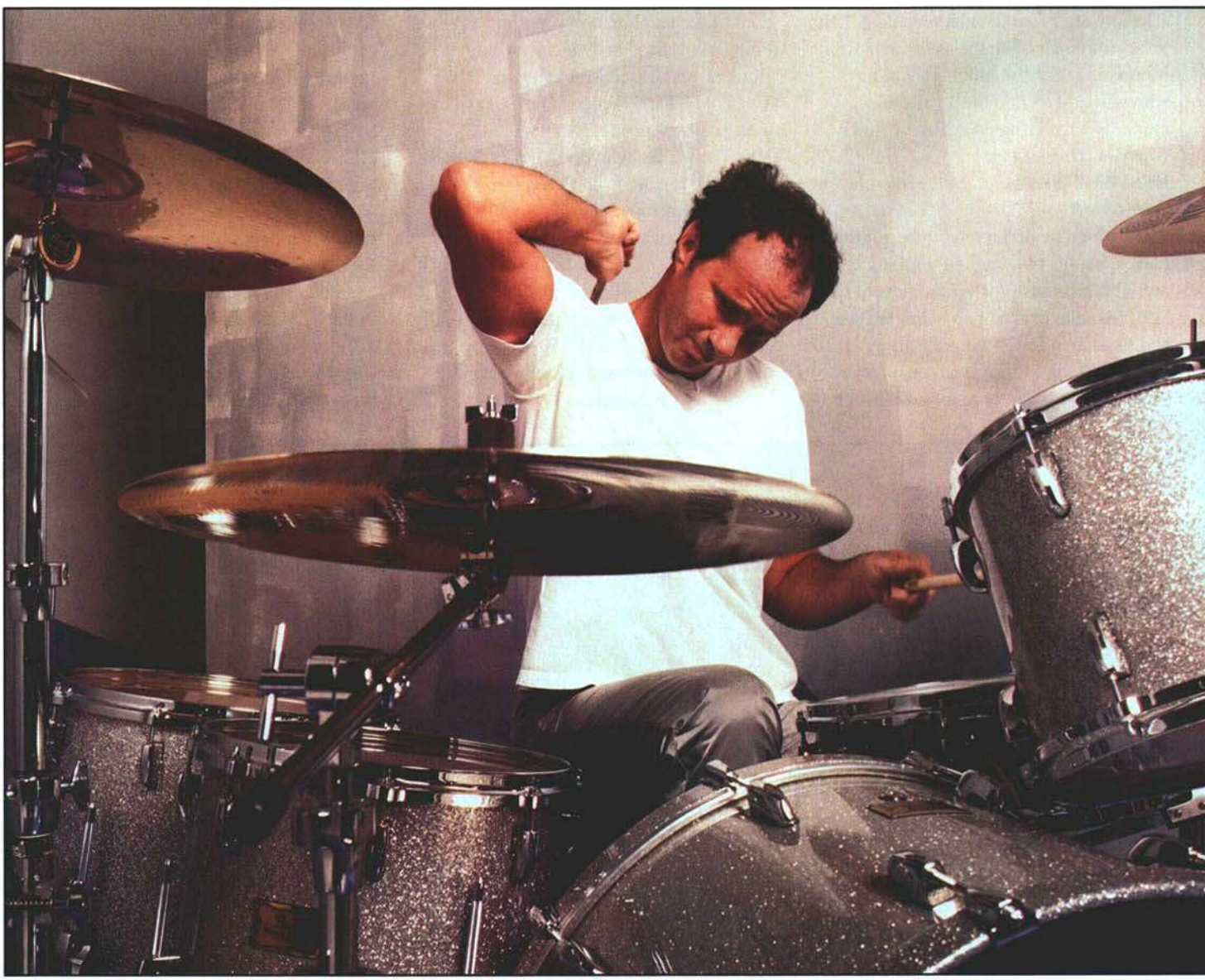
RF: You've talked about your three primary influences—John Bonham, Keith Moon, and Mitch Mitchell. Can you analyze the aspects of their playing style that have infiltrated your drumming?

CS: I got the partying from Keith Moon. As you can see, there are ghosts. Keith Moon was the first guy I ever heard who incorporated such wild abandon. He had such personality, and it came out more in his playing than almost any other musician. No one else played like that. He was the first one I heard incorporate crashes in the middle of his fills. *Live At Leeds* and *Quadrophenia* are my favorite Who records. I don't play anything like Moon, but what really moved me was that he always sounded like he was having so much fun playing the drums.

RF: So it was his attitude that you "adopted."

CS: Yes. It took me a while to figure out that you don't have to do little fills every four bars. When you're a young player, you want to do your Neil Peart stuff. He's famous for his solos, but what he played for the songs was the right thing. As I mature as a player—I hope—I understand more and more that it's important to play what's right for the song rather than try to call attention to the cool little fill that I practiced at home for two weeks.

I'm not a soloist. I'm a drummer who tries to play in a way that really supports the song and the other musicians. If you don't notice me that much, but it feels good, that's the highest compliment I can get. Jeff Porcaro—and I'm not in any way putting myself in a league with him—was a master at that. He might do that one little thing at the end to take it out, but every-



thing felt so good.

RF: You may not be out front, but the band is actually made up of four separate identities that come together to make one sound. So in a way, your individual style creates an important component to the band's sound.

CS: We've been blessed to have great players in our band. John Frusciante sounds completely different from Dave Navarro, which changes the complexion of the band and makes the other guys play differently.

RF: So the style of each player is integral to the music that comes out, which implies that each person's individuality *is* noticeable.

CS: We're each a voice in the group. I think that's what makes really great groups, because if you take one person out of the band, it just doesn't have the same magic. Led Zeppelin didn't want to play anymore after John Bonham died, and The Who was never quite the same after Keith Moon died. But I'm talking about guys who will go down in the annals of rock music as huge influences. I'm not anywhere in their league.

RF: Where does Mitch Mitchell come into your style?

CS: I would never pretend to be a jazz player, but his playing really influenced me. Those English rock drummers of the late '60s, like Mitchell and Ginger Baker, had that Elvin Jones thing. Elvin was jazz with a little bit of rock, and those guys were rock with a little bit of jazz. Mitch Mitchell had that tight drum sound with the more jazz tuning and free-flowing, spontaneous style that lent itself to Hendrix and him playing off of each other. That really turned me on. You could hear him *listening.* He had huge ears.

Listening is so important because so many players are caught up in their technique—this run, or this hand/foot thing—that they forget about their ears and listening to what's going on around them. The drummer has to hold it all together and make it feel good, so it's especially important for his ears to be big. And by the way, Mitch Mitchell was another ghost-noter. I liked his sound. It wasn't as powerful as John Bonham, but that guy could make a hell of a racket. He has a distinct personality on the drums.

There aren't a lot of drummers who have their own actual sound. Stewart Copeland does: You hear him and you know it's him. Phil Collins has his own sound, John Bonham and Mitch Mitchell, too. These are people whose sound is an extension of their personalities.

RF: The people who don't have focused, strong personalities don't seem to have that kind of identifiable sound.

CS: When I was in high school I loved Neil Peart. I had a chance to work with an engineer who worked on a couple of Rush records who said Peart's personality really came through the music. He's a very smart, meticulous, structured, exacting player, which is his personality.

RF: What provided the funk influence in your formative years?

CS: I'm more of a rock player in a funk setting.

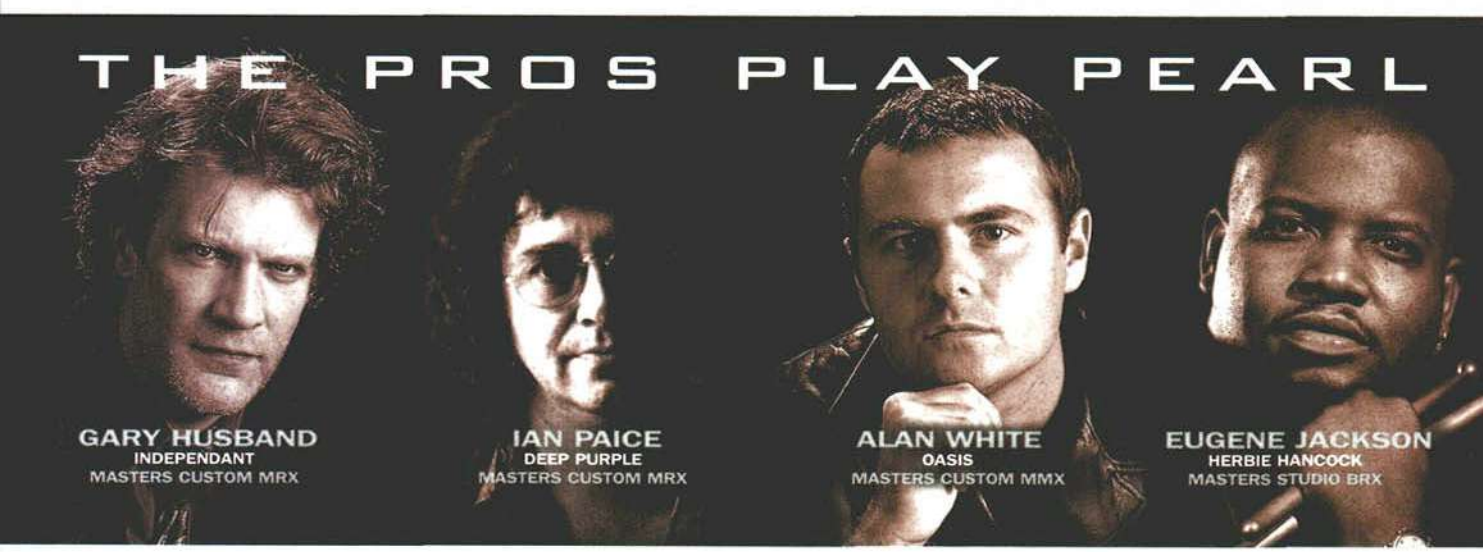
RF: You're a very funky rock player.

CS: I'll go with that. Growing up in Michigan, probably listening to the radio and Motown, had a lot to do with it. I loved Sly & The Family Stone records with Greg Errico and Andy Newmark. Flea comes from a real funk background. He influences me, and it's a hard funk. It's not like Zig [Modeliste], it comes more from a rock base. I'm not pretending to be a funk guy who is all of a sudden going to try to play like Clyde Stubblefield.

My earlier funk experience was not just from listening. I played with former P-Funk percussionist Larry Fratangelo in a band called Pharaoh for a year. I was twenty years old when I joined the band, and Larry really helped me with the finer points of playing. He turned me onto Tower Of Power, P-Funk, and George Clinton, and really took me under his wing. That must have been where the funk seeped in.

RF: Do you recall The Chili Peppers audition, where you had to apply all that had seeped?

CS: When I auditioned for The Chili Peppers, they were kind of a college cult band that sold a few records. I wasn't a fan of the band particularly. They were just auditioning friends of friends and I had a friend who told them, "Chad eats drums for breakfast." So when I brought my drums in



to audition, Flea asked, "So, that's your breakfast?" And I'm going, "Huh?"

I set up and we started *rocking*. We just jammed. I didn't know any of their songs and they didn't care. There was musical chemistry right off the bat. I was playing and yelling in the back, and afterwards Flea said, "You were the first guy who was actually leading me. Most of the other guys were waiting. You just got in there and busted out."

RF: It's that strong personality.

CS: Love it or leave it.

RF: When you got the gig, was there anything you had to do musically to prepare for working with them?

CS: Anthony gave me a tape of some Meters and Funkadelic and said, "This is the stuff we really like," but it wasn't like, "Play like this." It was more like, "Check this out." I was totally open to it and we definitely had musical influences in common. And I think it was more that common lust for making the best music we could possibly make. I was—and still am—pretty dedicated. This is what I wanted to do, and I was passionate about it and I think they picked up on it.

Anyway, after the audition, they left a message on my answering machine, "Okay, you can have the gig, but you have to come to rehearsal with a shaved head." I had long hair at the time. I was like, "I'm not shaving my head!" I'm much bigger than those guys and they can't hold me down. [laughs] I think that was my initiation—just to see if I'd do it.

RF: Does anybody ever have to pull you back or rein you in with The Chili Peppers?

CS: That's more producer Rick Rubin's role. This is the third album we've worked on with him. He had done The Beastie Boys, Run DMC, Public Enemy, and Aerosmith's "Walk This Way," and he had Slayer and The Black Crowes on his label, American Records.

Back when we were first considering Rick, Anthony was concerned that he was going to turn us into some heavy metal, blood-drinking band, but Rick is pretty cool. He's softened up somewhat now, but eight years ago he was always with sunglasses and the beard and he looked like he was drinking goat's blood. He's really a big teddy bear, though, the sweetest guy—and smart and very musical.

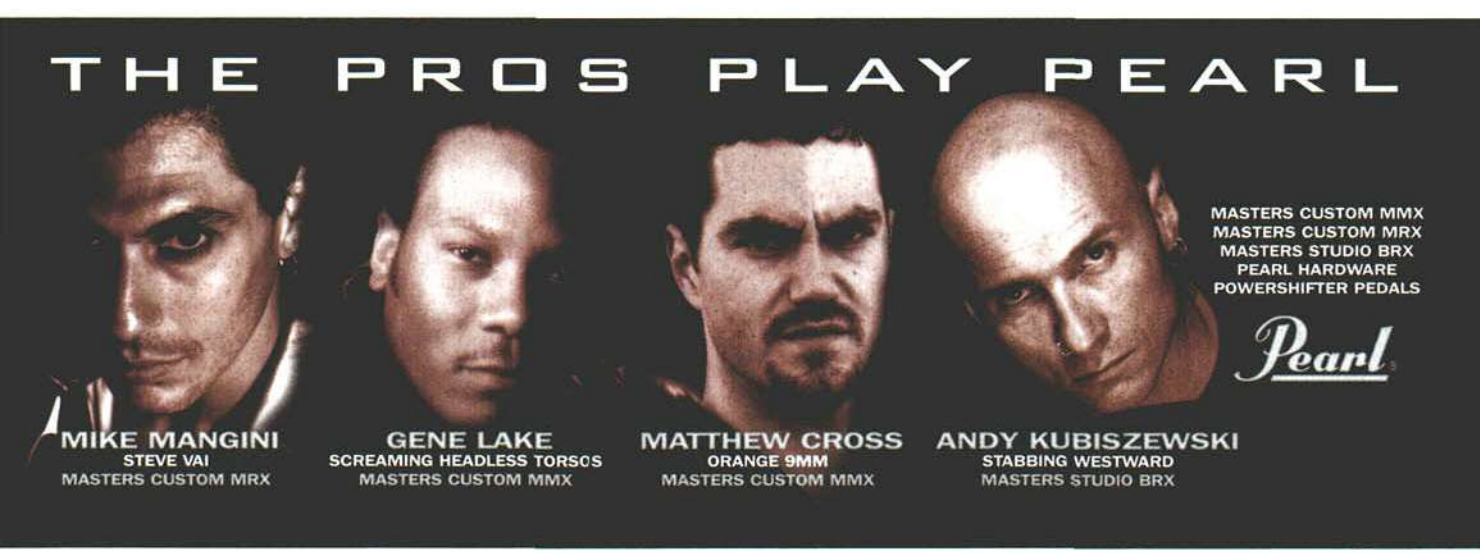
MAGIK TRACKS

These are the albums that Chad says best represent his playing:

Artist	Album
Red Hot Chili Peppers	Blood Sugar Sex Magik
	Californication
	One Hot Minute
	Mothers Milk
Queen	"We Will Rock You" Remix
Leah Andreone	Alchemy
Toby Redd	In The Light
John Fogerty	Blue Moon Swamp

...and these are the ones he listens to for inspiration:

Artist	Album	Drummer
Led Zeppelin	any	John Bonham
The Who	Live At Leeds	Keith Moon
Marvin Gaye	What's Going On	Chet Forest
Black Sabbath	Volume IV	Bill Ward
Sly Stone	Fresh	Andy Newmark
Funkadelic	Maggot Brain	Ramon "Tiki" Fulwood
Jimi Hendrix	Axis: Bold As Love	Mitch Mitchell
Neil Young	Harvest	Ken Buttrey
Elvis Presley	American Trilogy	Ron Tutt
John Coltrane	A Love Supreme	Elvin Jones



Rick has a lot of the same influences that we do in rap and rock music, and he's our age. On *Blood Sugar* he really helped us turn our jams-meet-raps into *songs.* That's his greatest asset. He's not a technical guy at all: He's not an engineer-turned-producer. He just knows what he likes. We'll have ten song ideas and we'll play them for him and he'll give us an objective, unbiased opinion. Sometimes we butt heads, other times it might be, "I like that part, but that other part doesn't do anything for me." Sometimes we don't have lyrics and he'll say, "I like it, but I've got to hear it with the singing on it." He's really good at melding our kind of unpolished musical sections into songs and helping us get in and out of sections.

Rick has worked with great people, and because of our relationship I've been fortunate to work with people like Johnny Cash, and we got to do that LL Cool J thing ["I Make My Own Rules"] for the Howard Stern soundtrack. For us, he's become like George Martin of The Beatles—he's the fifth Chili Pepper.

RF: What would be a disagreement in the studio and how would it get resolved?

CS: It really is a democratic situation where if somebody's playing something and one of us doesn't like it, we're very honest. We're lucky that we're not afraid to say, "I don't really like that," or "That part sucks." The worst thing, though, is to say, "I don't like it," without being able to give a reason. You always have to say why. If someone really doesn't like something, even if everyone else does, there's no reason to shove something down someone else's throat. It's never going to work anyway if somebody's not there. So we move on. We've got lots of ideas.

RF: "Parallel Universe" is a real rocker.

CS: That's my Larry Mullen Jr. imitation. We were going to try to cut it with a click because it seemed like a song that would lend itself to using one, but it worked out without it.

RF: At the end I hear your Keith Moon influence.

CS: It had even more on there than what's there now. That's a track where Rick Rubin said to me, "Leave that for the live version."

RF: What are you doing on "Purple Stain"?

CS: Jamming, rocking out. The bass line just stays the same, so Flea's the drummer on it. He's holding down the bottom so I get a chance to stretch out a little. The outro is as far as I go on this record, that's for sure. John is playing rhythm too, so I'm freed up to take the rhythm a little outside—not *out* out, but….

RF: You sound like you're just about to fall off a cliff, but you make it back at the very last moment.

CS: That's a good feeling, as long as you don't take it too far over the edge, just far enough so you *almost* go over the cliff.

RF: What inspired your part on "Porcelain"?

CS: The drunken kind of feeling of the tune just made me feel like we should be sitting in some dirty, stinky, dank jazz basement somewhere. It's not a jazz song—it's in three—but it's just something I thought would sound right.

RF: You used different equipment on it.

CS: I really felt the song needed a distinctly different sound from the regular rock drumset. I used a smaller kit with a bigger bass drum, with just a few mic's. We didn't use any close miking on that one.

RF: You put yourself into the dank jazz club.

CS: Exactly. We turned off the lights and we all just vibed out. There's so much space in the song—lots of whole notes. And I've never used brushes on a Chili Peppers tune before that one, that's for sure. I'm sure no drummers will be writing in and asking about my brush technique, but it was right for the song. The cymbal was a big Sabian ride, probably 22" or 24" with rivets, and I just crashed on it. I wanted that big wash.

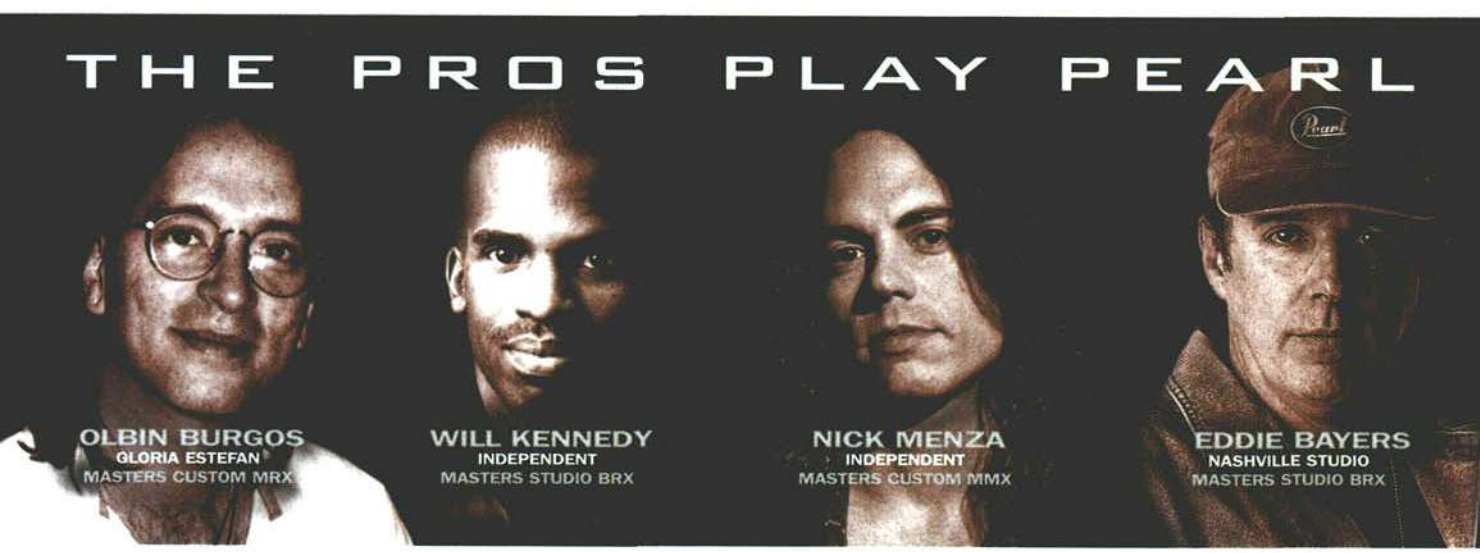
RF: Did you immediately gravitate toward brushes?

CS: Yes, probably more because of the volume and also because the song sounded to me as if it should be like an old record spinning with the needle falling off.

RF: What's great is that you have the imagination to go beyond what would be considered the norm for the band.

CS: The cool thing about our group is that there are no boundaries to what we can sound like—and there never really have been.

RF: How will your live sound and equip-



ment differ on the upcoming tour?

CS: I've pared down, not that I ever had a big setup. I'm just using one rack, two floors, a couple of cymbals. That limits how crazy I can get.

RF: It can actually make you more creative.

CS: You're right. If you don't have as many options, you have to try to do things that sound more interesting with fewer things. In this situation, I don't feel the need to have a big drumset. Most of the stuff I do is just keeping the groove—hi-hat, kick, snare—with just a couple of fills thrown in. Buddy Rich didn't have a big drumset, and he made a *lot* of racket. Mitch Mitchell in the early days only had a four- or five-piece, John Bonham too.

RF: Why did this record take so long?

CS: It didn't take long once we started writing it. And then we cut the basic tracks in seven days—twenty-three tracks! Six years—and seven days! It's kooky.

RF: What were you doing between albums?

CS: We tried to write songs with Dave [Navarro]. We went to Hawaii like we did for *One Hot Minute* and wrote a song before Flea and Dave went on the Jane's Addiction tour, which came out pretty good. When we got back together after their tour, it wasn't a healthy environment in which to create.

RF: Don't you go crazy during the down time?

CS: Yes. The worst thing about drugs and people who do drugs is that they get consumed by them and nothing else matters. Things get done but it takes a really long time. It's so frustrating when you're around it. We recorded the basic tracks for *One Hot Minute* in '94 and Anthony didn't get around to singing on them until a year later, and that's really frustrating. I like to do stuff, but when that goes on, life is pretty much on hold.

It's very selfish of the people doing the drugs, but they don't know it at the time because they're so self-absorbed in their whole thing. It doesn't just affect the person who is doing it, it affects everybody. I used to get mad about it, but then when I really saw the disease of drug addiction and what it does to people, I just had to feel sorry for them. When you see how good things can really be and you realize you could have *three* albums out in that time, it's very frustrating.

I have so much invested in this band and I'm proud of it. It's part of my identity. That's not to say I couldn't do other things, but I *live* The Red Hot Chili Peppers. If we sucked and were playing bad music or we were just cranking it out because somebody gave us the money to make an album, that would be a different story. But I think we're a great band and I don't want to give up on it.

RF: Of the four albums you've done with the band, which are you most fond of?

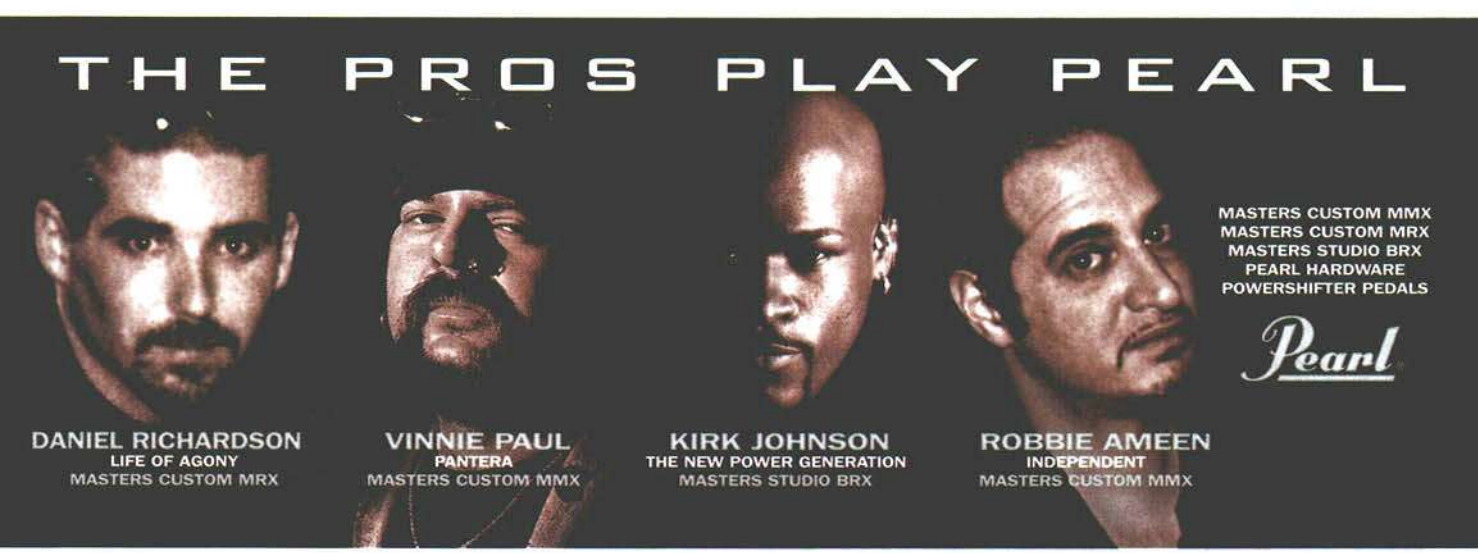
CS: My favorite Chili Peppers album is *Uplift Mofo Party Plan,* which I'm not on—Jack Irons played on that one. I think it's so great—the songs, the vibe—I enjoy listening to it over and over. Of the stuff I'm on, I like all our records.

When I first joined the group, it was a new thing and we were recording right away. While it had a freshness and it was exciting to me, listening back to *Mother's Milk* now, well, we don't sound like a real cohesive unit. It *sounds* like a new thing. There's nothing that replaces the thing that happens after guys have been playing together for a long time, writing songs, hanging out, and getting to know each other, especially in a band like ours.

Blood Sugar came so easy, recording at the house, working with Rick for the first time. It sounded like a band and I think it was the first time The Red Hot Chili Peppers really captured the way we sound organically, just us playing in a room. Those songs lent themselves to being recorded that way, and we were very prepared when we went into the studio just like we were this time.

One Hot Minute was not like that. Dave had joined and it was new again, so we were kind of feeling each other out. The record has its moments, but it's a different band. When one person is replaced, it's going to sound different. It was cool. It wasn't a bad experience, although like I said before, it was kind of frustrating that the writing took so long.

Coming together and writing *Californication* with John feels like a natural progression of where we left off with *Blood Sugar* with him, and we're lucky to



be able to have the chance to do it again. There's a definite chemistry that happens with the four of us, and this record went so smoothly. When we're able to just bang the songs out and we're only concerned with trying to get good performances, it's very easy. And when it goes easy, it's fun and everybody is in a good mood.

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As I mentioned, we wrote the majority of this album in Flea's garage over the summer, and in October we went into a proper rehearsal place with a PA. We spent another month writing a few more songs and working on the ones we had. Then Rick came in and we worked for another three weeks with his fine tuning, bouncing ideas, writing more stuff. Then we went into the studio at the beginning of January, and *boom*—seven days for the basics.

RF: Of your body of work with The Chili Peppers, can you pick a few representative tracks and give us the story behind creating them?

CS: "Give It Away" *[Blood Sugar]* is one of those groove songs that is a good indication of who I am. It's a hard funk groove that's no-nonsense and straight-ahead. I think the drums propel the track, and it came so easy. We wrote that song so fast—it was a jam and it was done.

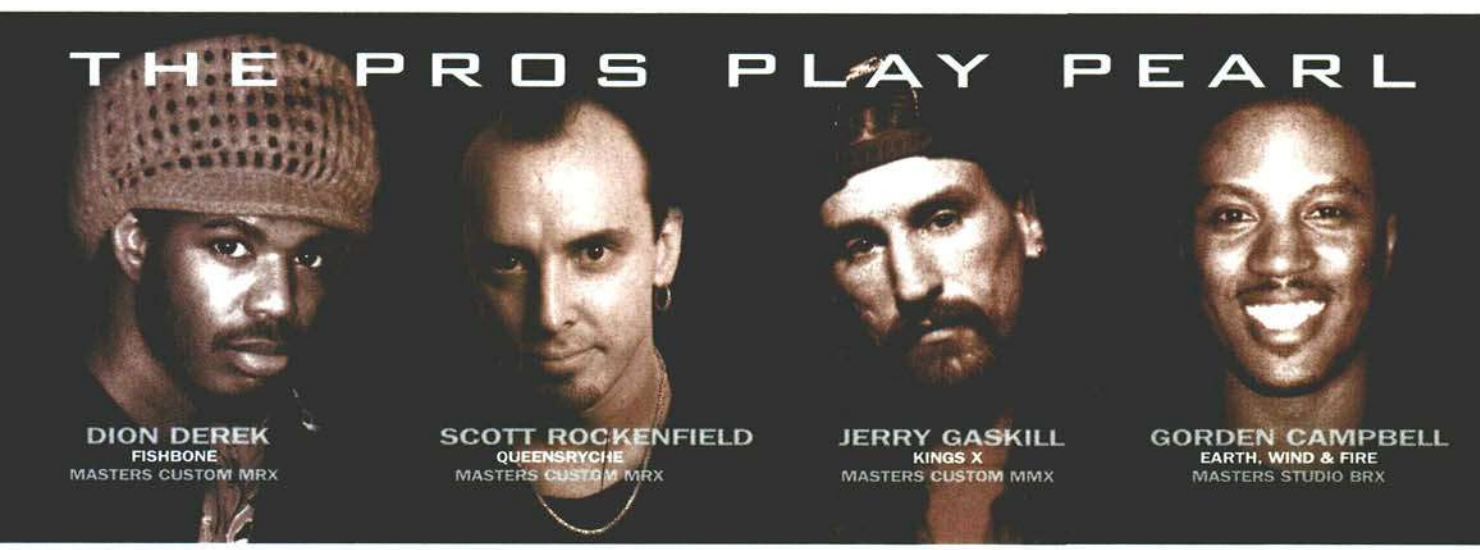
Another song on *Blood Sugar* I like is "Sir Psycho Sexy," which is a longer number, and it's slamming. We did a Robert Johnson cover on *Blood Sugar* ("They're Red Hot") as well, when we were recording at the house. We did it outside, up on a hill, at 2:00 in the morning with a remote truck. We put a little drumset up, it was late, and we didn't want the cops there—at least not right away—so we did a few passes at it. I ended up playing it with my hands—no sticks. It was kinda fast, and my hands were bleeding. At the very end of the song, after we stop, you can hear the cars on Laurel Canyon going by and someone yelling out their car window.

When we did "Higher Ground" for the *Mother's Milk* sessions, we had some difficulty. For some reason we weren't getting the right feel. I was doing a consistent triplet pattern on the bass drum that was crippling my calf muscle. I couldn't keep it going for the whole song, and I was pissed. The producer was coming out into the room, trying to cheerlead us to play it all the way through. Flea played naked, John played with us and then he left, and it was just me and Flea. But I couldn't get it. I finally had to leave it, but when I came back the next day we nailed it. It was the hardest track to get on that record and it turned out to be the most popular, so you never know. Some of the drums are triggered, which works okay for that track, but it loses the dynamics of my playing.

RF: Speaking of dynamics, what did you do to develop that aspect of your playing?

CS: Larry Fratangelo helped me with that. I think before then I would just concentrate on keeping good time and power my way through a song. We were in an eight-piece band and rehearsing, and sometimes it would just get out of control because there were no dynamics. Larry said, "Chad, you have to get the band's attention. They have to be listening to you, so after the solo, we're going to bring it down and that first beat needs to be really soft so they have to listen."

RF: So it's not necessarily the loudest guy



who gets heard.

CS: Exactly. Larry said, "You've got to reel them in." Up until then I had just played the songs, and it was the louder the better. But when we added more pieces to the puzzle and everybody wanted to be heard, the next thing we knew it was just a wash of sound with no dynamics. He definitely helped me with that concept, and that's just about being a good musician and a good listener.

The drums are a big dictator of dynamics. The easiest thing for me to do is to play hard and fast. The hardest thing is to play slow and quiet. To be solid, consistent, and quiet takes great control. Larry's suggesting that in that band situation made all the difference. I still remember we were playing Tower Of Power's "What Is Hip?" and after the solo everyone went to wail. Larry said, "Listen to how Garibaldi doesn't come in right away with the snare on the 2. He waits 'til the next bar."

RF: What would you say are your strengths and weaknesses?

CS: I think I have good ears—I'm a good listener, which is so important. On a more personal level, I think one of the strengths I bring to the group is a certain balance. If too many guys are way over the edge, too nutty, or too eccentric, it makes for an impossible situation. I think I bring a kind of grounding to the group. They know I'm always going to show up, I'm always going to perform to the best of my ability, and when they look back there, I'll be banging away and everything will be okay. Uncle Chad is there and they can count on me.

As for weaknesses, I think I'm pretty lazy. I could definitely work way harder at being a technically better drummer. I have a big house and I don't have a drumkit set up—it's ridiculous. This is a lame excuse, but I just enjoy playing with people so much more than playing by myself or practicing. It's definitely a lame excuse.

RF: Any musical regrets?

CS: I've been fortunate because I've known what I've wanted to do since I was a little kid. Right out of high school I knew I didn't want to go to college, I wanted to play music. So I went right into playing in clubs and bars. At the time I may not have been happy when I was banging it out in those Detroit clubs doing three sets a night, six nights a week, making no money, and wishing I could be in a big rock band. But I'm so happy now that I did that at the time because it really honed my playing. I wouldn't trade those experiences for anything. When the opportunity came to be with The Chili Peppers, I was ready.

I've been in the band for ten years, and I feel so fortunate. For one thing, most bands don't last ten years. I'm in a band that I enjoy playing in and one where I'm a part of the creative process. I'm so fortunate to be able to do what I love to do, to make a living at it, and to be in a group that I think makes great music. I can't have too many regrets on the musical side of things.

I can't think of another *living* band I'd rather be in. Sure, I'd like to play in Led Zeppelin or with Jimi Hendrix. But from a musical standpoint, this isn't a bad gig.

A great big "thank you" goes to Doreen Reardon for her assistance with this article.

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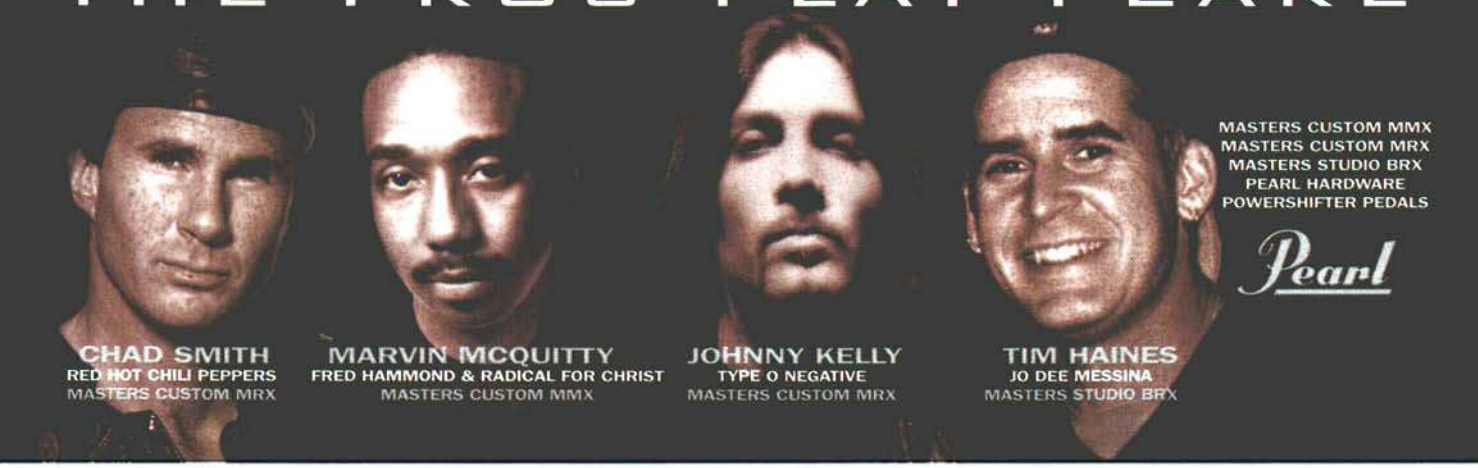

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In two previous ads, we've seen the details of two very different Starclassic Maple series kits: Kenny Aronoff's on the Smashing Pumpkin's Tour and David Silveria's on Korn's Family Values Tour. And as you would expect, John Tempesta's kit for Rob Zombie represents his own concept of what drums he needs and just how and where they should be placed.

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TAMA

The Amazing Mechanics Of

Mike Mangini

Story by Mike Haid • Photos by Alex Solca

Most drummers who get involved in the educational side of music tend to choose a particular style, or maybe a set of rudimental exercises, to base their ideas on. For the most part, these ideas have become overused and, yes, even a bit stale. But for Mike Mangini, the bright-thinking phenom with credits ranging from Extreme to Steve Vai, coming up with his own mind-bending approach was a snap.

Creatively using his time-management skills, the Boston-area native has been able to script two books' worth of revolutionary "mind meets mechanics" learning techniques to help develop four-limb independence. And we mean *total* independence. Mangini has a name for this approach—and has likewise titled his books—*Rhythm Knowledge.*

Regularly proving his theory, this young master has created and performed some of the most outlandish parts ever recorded, which include the multi-polyrhythmic nightmare "Egg Zooming" from the recent Mike Keneally album *Sluggo!,* as well as amazing tracks on new recordings by Steve Vai and Mullmuzzler (a Magna Carta release featuring Dream Theater vocalist James LaBrie). Mangini, along with drummers Virgil Donati and European sensation Marco Minnemann, are taking the mechanics and the mental aspects of drumming to unbelievable new levels.

Besides devising his own system for learning, Mangini has developed a unique "open stance" drum setup to help execute his ideas. And his obsession with perfection of his craft not only impacts the mental side of his development; the physical side is addressed as well. Mike is devoted to a totally healthy lifestyle of exercise and nutrition. And his dedication to teaching is obvious as well, especially when watching him perform clinics, something he has begun doing a lot of lately for Zildjian. He imparts information with the enthusiasm of a high school kid who just won first-chair in an all-state drumline.

To come up with an innovative new learning method is highly commendable. To develop a unique drum setup is admirable. But to have the ability to immediately create ambidextrous drum parts in any time signature *and* be able to polyrhythmically subdivide those time signatures is just not fair—it's *scary.*

MH: Can you describe your concept of playing and how your "open stance" drum setup fits into this concept?

MM: The concept is "musicality meets mechanics." I was trained as a classical musician, which is a big part of what I do in terms of making musical decisions on the drums. For me to use the sounds of the drumkit in a way I feel is appropriate—and wanting to keep up with guitarists like Nuno Bettencourt and Steve Vai—I arranged my drumkit based around two cable hi-hats placed on opposite sides of the kit, which allows me to position the toms in a symmetrical fashion descending from the center. So now my drumming style reflects a classical foundation with a modern physical approach.

The "rhythm knowledge" system itself manages the mechanics of the human brain and body to develop the mechanics of rhythm. In order to be prepared to express myself musically in any way I want, I felt I had to be able to develop my dexterity so that any two of my limbs could equally play sixteen alternating single strokes per second. My left foot can lead my right hand at that rate, or my right foot can lead my left hand at that rate—any hand or foot combination. I've actually developed my hands even further, where I can execute up to eighteen notes per second with either hand with my one-handed "fulcrum off the rim" roll.

The next step I needed to take was to develop the ability to phrase those alternating strokes up to that speed in different note groupings—from two to twenty. Now I have the ability to phrase any note grouping within that grid, which is very helpful when I'm playing more complex music. So when I incorporated all of this into one system, it became "rhythm knowledge."

I'm very fear-driven about my playing, and developing this system was a way to keep me prepared to play some of the very challenging music I get called to do. I have a very disciplined family background and was brought up with absolutes. They would have knocked the wind out of me if I had slipped up in any way. So I had to do well in school whether I liked it or not.

MH: When did you develop this concept and switch from a traditional drum setup to the "open stance" setup?

MM: It developed in parts. At age seven I began to slow down records to figure out what was being played. I was into Buddy Rich, and he was playing so fast that the only way to figure out what he was doing was to slow the music down. There was no way at that age I could actually figure out what he was doing, but that began the system of slowing things down to better understand them.

I was also fortunate to have a great percussion instructor named Walter Tokarczyk. He was able to explain why I should do things certain ways. You'll notice that in my books the number-one priority is having the will to want to do

something. Later on in life I realized that I could open the long-term memory of the brain just by wanting to do something. It's amazing how the gates just open up. So with all of that under my belt I was able to compete for classical *and* jazz positions.

The metamorphosis from a regular kit happened when I forced myself to train all of my limbs. I put the ride cymbal on my left side like Simon Phillips, who was also an inspiration. In fact, there are several drummers who have influenced me—Ringo Starr, Bobby Colomby, Danny Seraphine, Buddy Rich, John Bonham, Neil Peart, and Terry Bozzio. I took pieces of what they did and made them my own.

It was in my teenage years that I started using my left hand to lead. But I was in my twenties before I started leading with my left foot. It took me about four years to get the left side of my body equal to my right. So now my right foot can step on a remote cable hi-hat that connects to a left-handed hi-hat, and the left foot can play kick drum—or vise versa. This allows me to stay on the left hi-hat using the left kick drum for most of the verses, because the A *Custom* hats that I have positioned there have a warmer sound. I typically play chorus sections of tunes on the brighter Zildjian *K/Z* hats because they bite more. Most melodies rise for the chorus, so using differently pitched cymbals helps to support that. Mainly, though, I didn't want to *not* be able to do this because my body couldn't do it; that was unacceptable. I knew that I could be more musical by training my body to be able to do certain things.

"Rhythm knowledge" came into play early on in my development not only because I was teaching and students were asking, "Why should I do this?" but also because I didn't have a lot of time. I was taking college courses at night and I was working full-time as a software engineer at Raytheon on the *Patriot* missile system. I was also playing in a band and teaching. When would I find time to practice? So by managing my time properly I came up with the whole system that helped me to focus.

As I went along I made charts and kept track of every possibility of everything I was trying to do. I also had to allow my muscle groups the proper time to develop.

MH: So you basically kept a musical diary of your progress as you were developing this new technique?

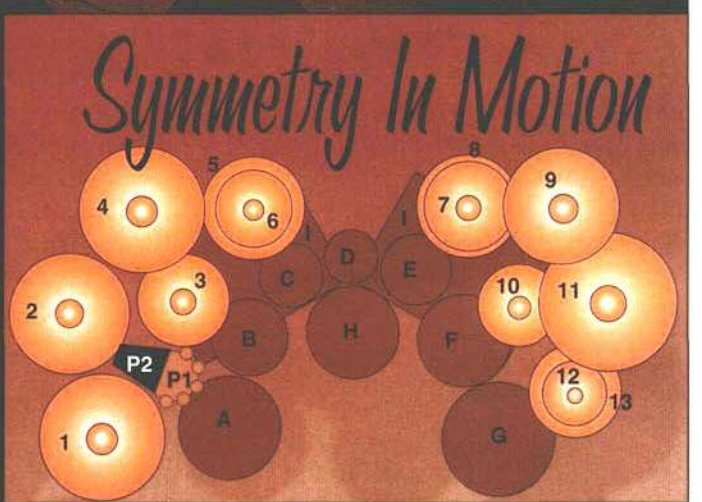
MM: Absolutely. It's amazing what having a pencil and a piece of paper by your drumkit can do. In fact, it even affected my setup. I was notating melodic lines that I wanted to play on the kit, but couldn't because of the limitation of the conventional setup. But I actually didn't start using this "open stance" setup until after I did the first Extreme tour. I installed this setup into my repertoire in 1994 after Extreme had toured Europe and we recorded the *Waiting For The Punchline* release. That's when I went into practice mode and decided to make this setup a reality.

I knew that by using this setup I could still keep the beat while accenting what Nuno was playing on guitar. For example, in the song "No Respect," at the end of his solo he's grouping six notes on each beat and phrasing the six notes in groups of four. In order for me to not break the groove and follow him I *had* to develop the open-stance system to pull it off. After a while I was following parts of his solos note-for-note. This setup works perfectly for playing ascending and descending chromatic lines.

MH: Besides all of the mental aspects of your playing style, you also have a very physical approach. What do you do to keep up physically?

Drums: Pearl
A. 14x16 tom
B. 8x12 tom
C. 6x8 tom
D. 5x6 tom
E. 8x10 tom
F. 10x14 tom
G. 16x18 tom
H. 6 1/2 x14 snare
I. 18x22 bass drum

Cymbals: Zildjian
1. 20" *Earth*ride
2. 19" *K Custom* China
3. 14" *A Custom* hi-hats
4. 20" *A* Custom crash
5. 16" *A Custom* splash
6. 12" *A Custom* splash
7. 14" *Oriental* China
8. 16" *Zil-Bel*
9. 19" *A* Custom crash
10. 13" *K/Z* hi-hats
11. 22" *Oriental* China
12. 8" splash (stacked on #13)
13. 14" *Oriental China*



P1. cowbell
P2. mounted tambourine

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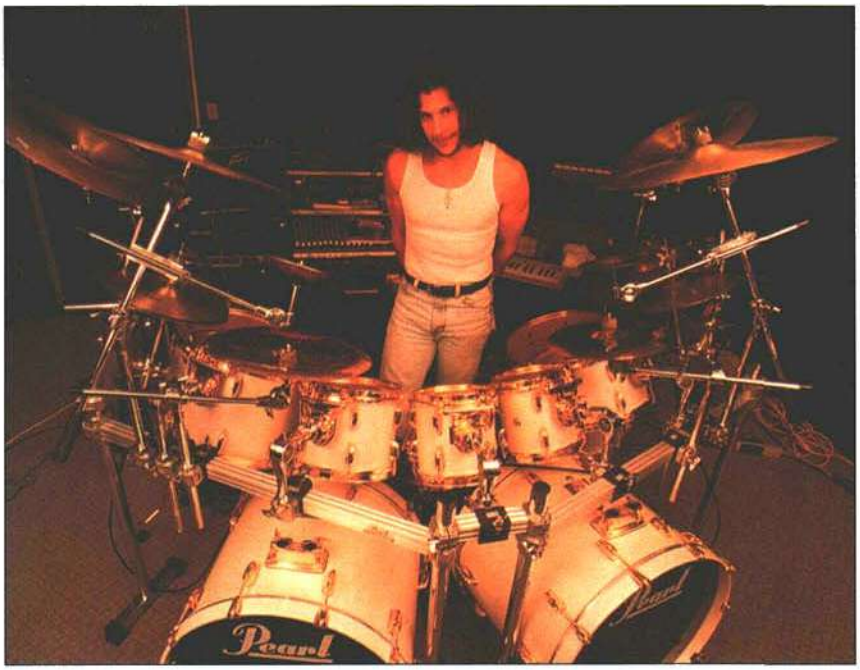
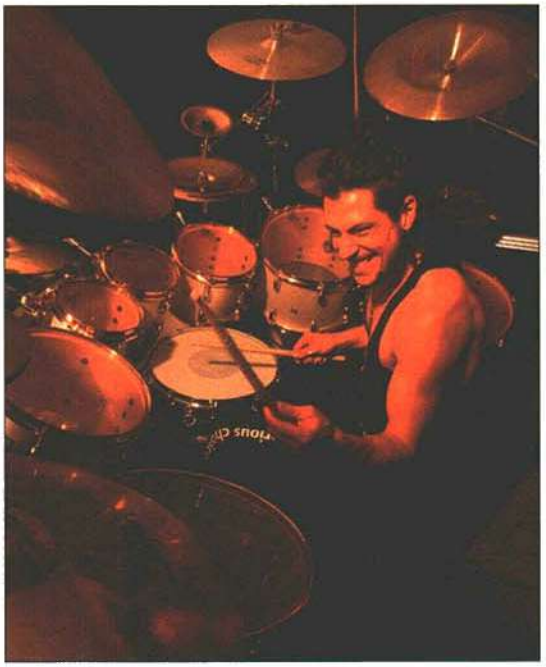
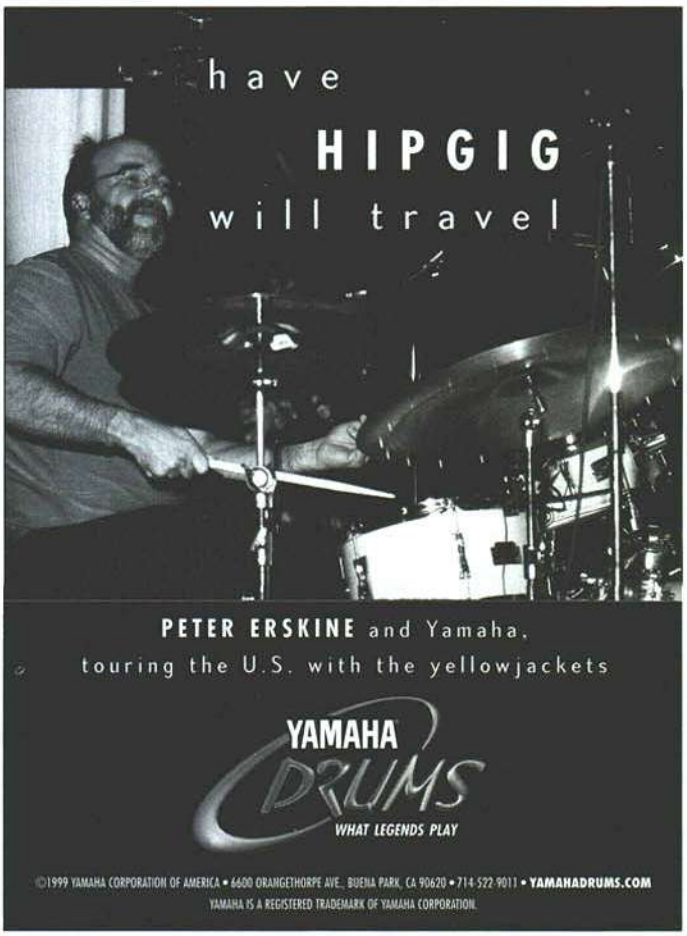
Note: Mike occasionally adds small special-effects cymbals to his setup, as in the photo above.

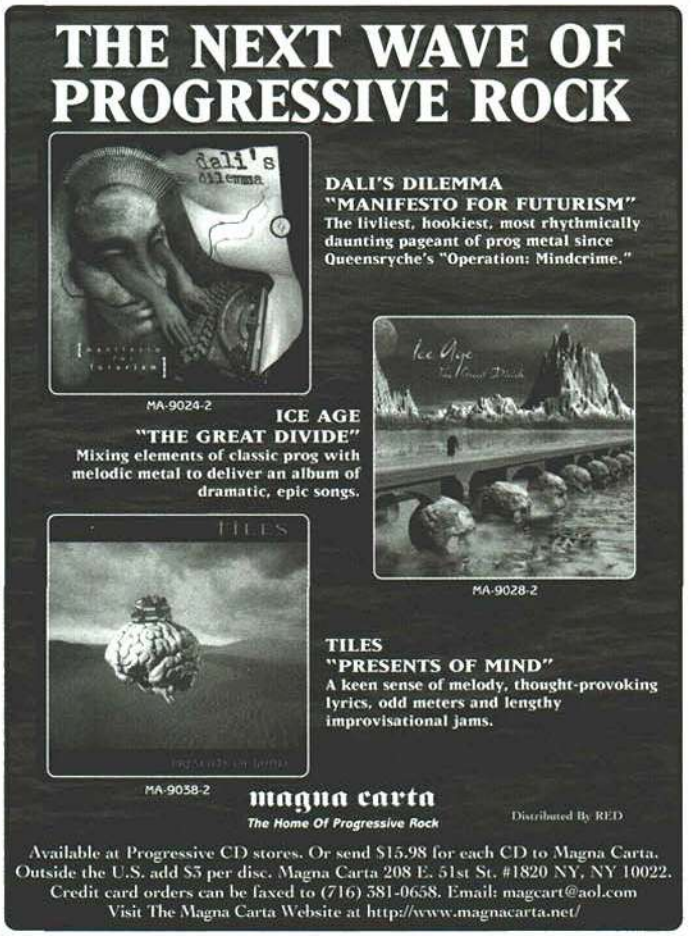




MM: I hired a physical trainer last year to help me gain strength and control. His name is C.C. Carter, and he's given much of his time and talents to me to help me gain new levels of control and speed. His approach is a very mechanical one, but he's helped me to develop my mind, body, and spirit. I owe him a lot of thanks.

Within the development of the body there are three aspects, which include nutrition, exercise, and cardiovascular. He's helping me to develop extra layers of muscle by doing weightlifting with lots of repetitions, which is exactly how we develop our drumming skills. You don't gain foot speed because your calf becomes three feet wide; you gain foot speed because of the signal-sending process from the brain to the muscle. The muscle group's ability to respond to what the brain tells it to do is what speed is, although the mass does





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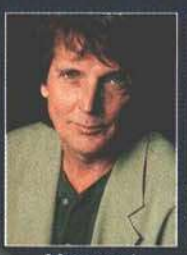
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A Mess Of Mangini

These are the records that Mike says best represent his playing:

Artist	Album
Mullmuzzler	Keep It To Yourself
Steve Vai	new
	G3 Live
	Fire Garden
Mike Keneally	Sluggo!
Extreme	Waiting For The Punchline
Nuno Bettencourt	Schizophonic
Annihilator	Set The World On Fire

develop with use.

What happens with most drummers is that they tend to peak out after a certain amount of practice. What weight training does for me is help to take me to a higher level of endurance, so that after five minutes I can still play single strokes at sixteen beats per second leading with any of my limbs.

MH: Do you feel that you've reached a point where you've mastered all four limbs to where you can execute practically any musical idea on the drumkit?

MM: Yes, and it feels so good to know that I've dedicated so much time and actually been able to accomplish something like this.

MH: How do you decide what side of your body to lead with when you go into a musical situation?

MM: As I touched on earlier, I decide based on the tones of the hi-hats. That dictates which foot I have to lead with on the kick drum. The tone of the hi-hat will support the groove and the melody. After that it moves to the choice of toms. If I hear guitar harmonics in a solo, I'm not going to hit a 20" floor tom. I'll hit the 6" tom and then follow the melody from there.

MH: With your skills being at such a high level, from where do you draw your inspiration for what you actually play?

MM: I draw one side of my inspiration from data that's made up of all possible rhythms that I've stored in my memory.

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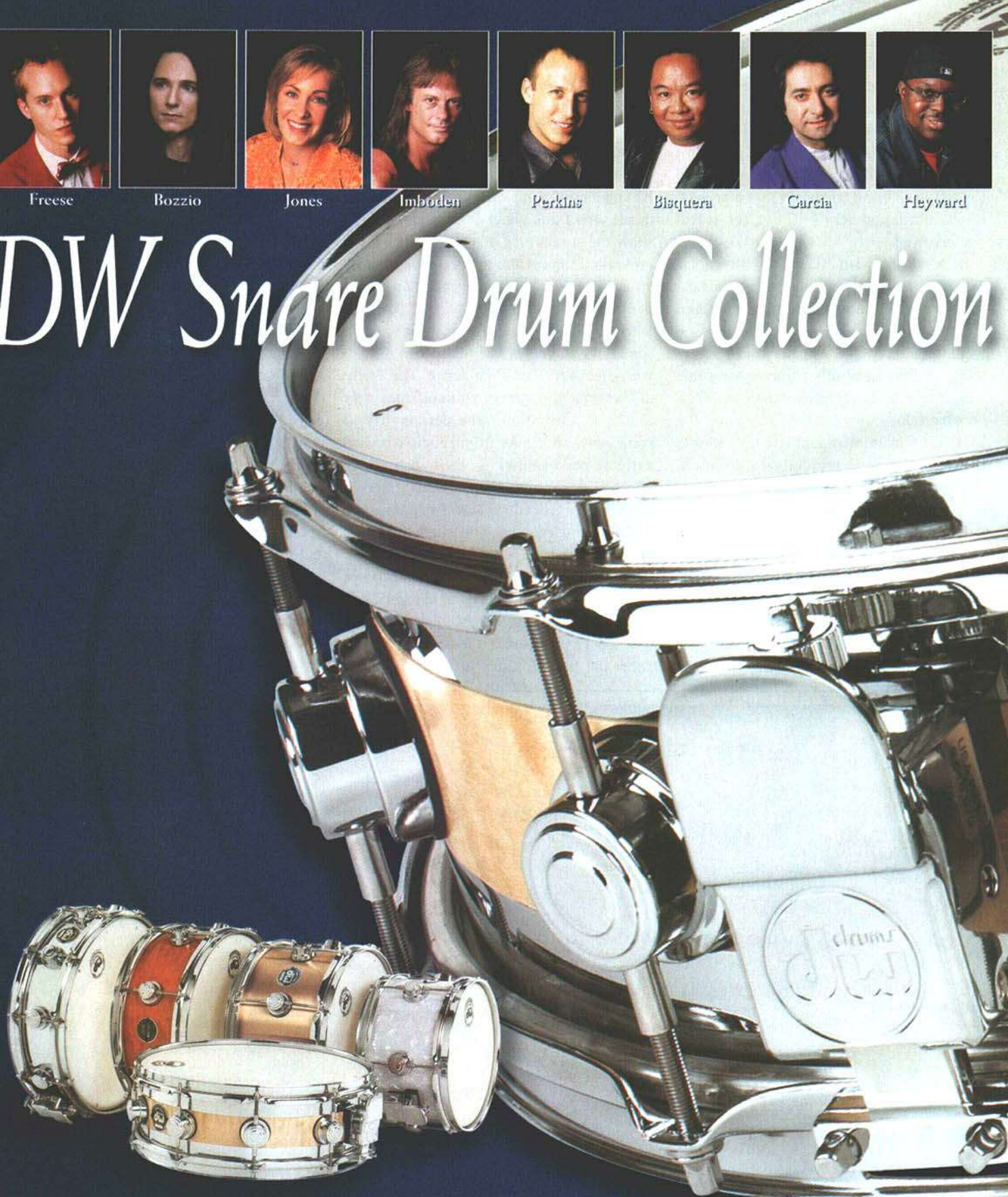

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MAY INTERNAL DRUM MIKING SYSTEM

The other side of my inspiration is drawn from working with other musicians. And when things don't work with other players, I know it's because I can't be myself. If I can't be honest and true to who I am with the music or the musicians, then I just can't do the project. But when it does work and I'm asked to bring what *I* do into a project, it's beautiful and very fulfilling for everyone involved.

In working with Steve Vai there's a mutual thought process that is very orchestral. We both know what it sounds and feels like to play eleven notes as opposed to thirteen and have it really mean something. Within all of this I find reasons that make me want to try even harder to develop what I do.

MH: With instrumental progressive music, the main theme is typically exploration. How do you try to make others who are not as educated understand the beauty and value of such important musical accomplishments and technical challenges?

MM: My main goal when doing clinics, for instance, is to communicate those thoughts by first putting a value on educating the mind. The metaphor I use is an open-casket funeral, which shows how lifeless a body is unless told what to do. What better way to stress the fact that, without the mind, the body is lifeless?

The first thing I stress is the *desire*. It has to be education by desire and not by force. Then I try to break everything down into terms that are easily understandable. Next I break things down into styles of music, and I talk about every style. I try to show the similarities of styles and how the grouping of notes and the accenting of specific notes within the beat make up a particular style.

My concept is that if you want to learn something, here's what it is. But it's up to *you* to learn it. That's the desire. The desire allows you to express yourself in a way that will allow your true personality to come out. I stole a lot from people who had extreme personalities on their instrument, like Neil Peart and Terry Bozzio. I stayed home and practiced because I was inspired, and I also used what I learned in school band and classical percussion.

I've seen that when a person becomes educated, their heart opens up. I use education to make myself happy. It's helped me to respect every kind of music. I only disrespect the bad attitudes that come from a lack of understanding. I don't like someone being mean to someone else because they don't understand them.

When you become more educated you also become more humble. We as drummers have a wonderful drumming community unlike any other that I've experienced. Jonathan Mover was very instrumental in getting me the gig with Steve Vai. Dennis Chambers has been very kind to me and helped me in many ways. Gregg Bissonette invited me to practice at his house when I moved to LA. Virgil Donati and I have exchanged trade secrets and have had a lot of fun together. A drummer hang is always a fun hang.

MH: Everything about what you do is positive. You're healthy, your mind is sharp, you're creating new ideas and having fun doing it. How do you get the average drummer to understand this concept? We're obviously not getting any help from society, with the lack today of music education on television and music programs being pulled from public schools.

MM: It's very sad. I had more bonding experiences from the high school band trips than any other time in my life. A lot of those people are still in my life and

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many are my best friends.

Learning to work together and compete is what made me want to work harder. I try to convey these thoughts in my clinics. I also try to support the products I'm using. If people don't support those products then the company can't afford to send me to do clinics. When a company gives me money to do a clinic I tell the audience that I'm getting paid by that company and that they're doing a great thing for drummers and drumming.

MH: Why is it that the public adores, admires, respects, and richly pays the greatest athletes and yet we don't embrace the great musicians in the same way?

MM: First of all, musicians don't have a rating system. We don't have batting averages. Not that it's important, but it would help to recognize some of the real heroes from the guys who aren't willing to work hard. Music is a bit more complicated in that there are great artists who use very unorthodox ways to do what they do, ways that are valid in a creative sense but may not be all that technical. It's not easy to pinpoint why somebody is great.

MH: Was Mike Keneally's "Egg Zooming" track from his *Sluggo!* release the hardest piece you've ever had to learn?

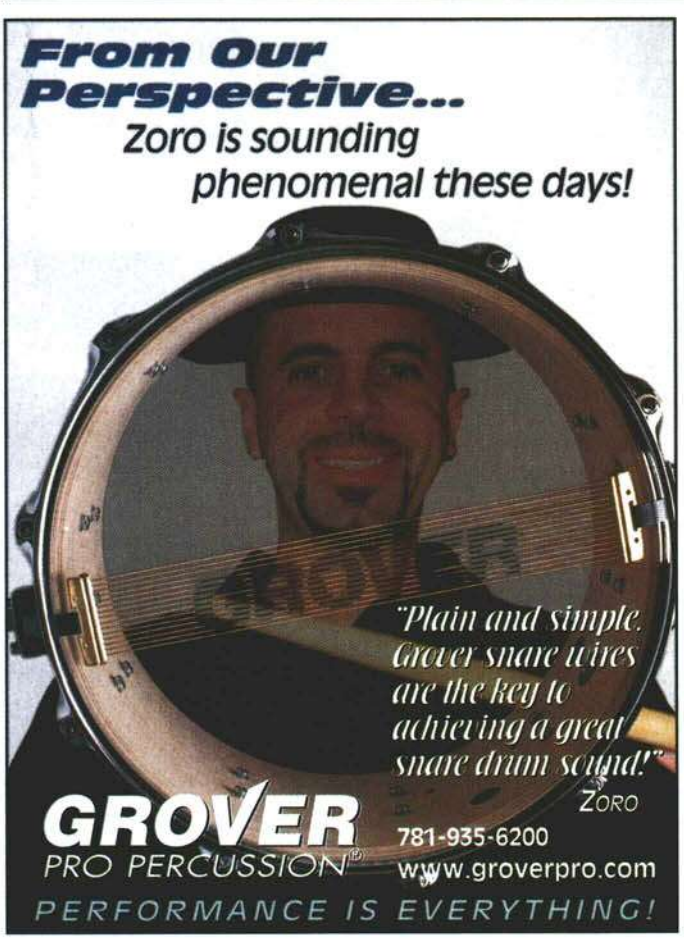
MM: Yes it was. If there were ever a reason why I've practiced combining numbers from two to twenty, with and against each other, that song is the reason. I started with a rough sketch of the song but basically had to sightread it when I did the track. Keneally walked me through each section while I created my parts in my head, and then I played him what I thought would work, and that was it. Much of it was read on the spot with the fills being improvised.

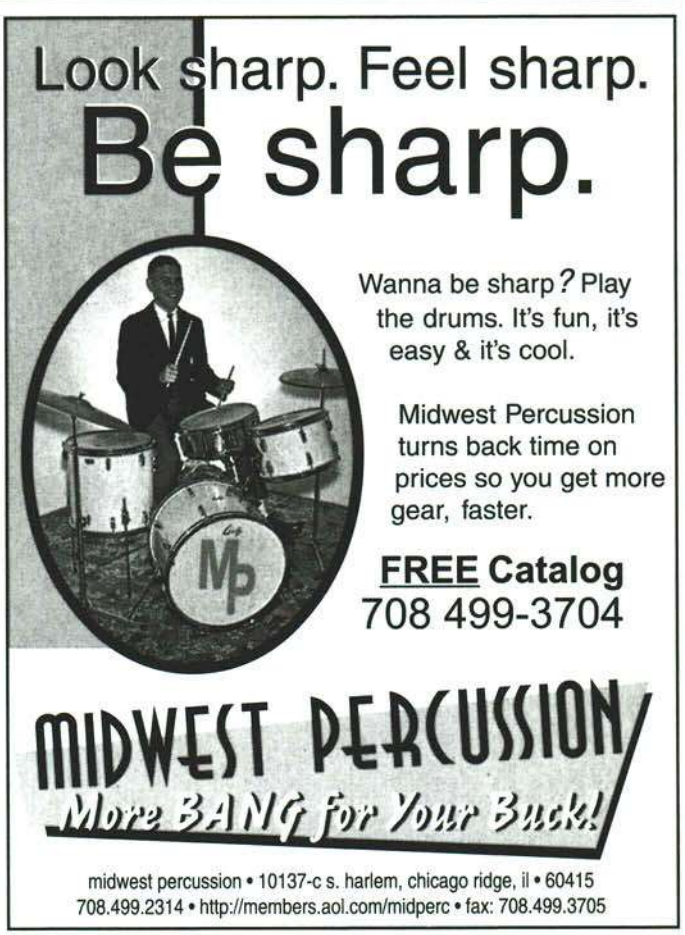
The opening section has two bars of nineteen against four and eleven against four, with my feet playing the nineteens and elevens while my hands are subdividing the quarter notes into 3's, 4's, 5's, and 7's. In the melody section all of the polyrhythms are played with my left hand while my right hand plays an unbroken quarter-note pattern on a *Zil-Bel.* Before the drum solo section Keneally decided he wanted a drum fill in 7/4, so I placed four notes against the seven and put eleven notes inside each one of the four notes. In the drum solo section I had to sing the time signature changes in my head as a guide to improvise over. I created triple-layered polyrhythms in that section mainly because for the first time in my life I was allowed to express the musical ideas that I felt inside of me.

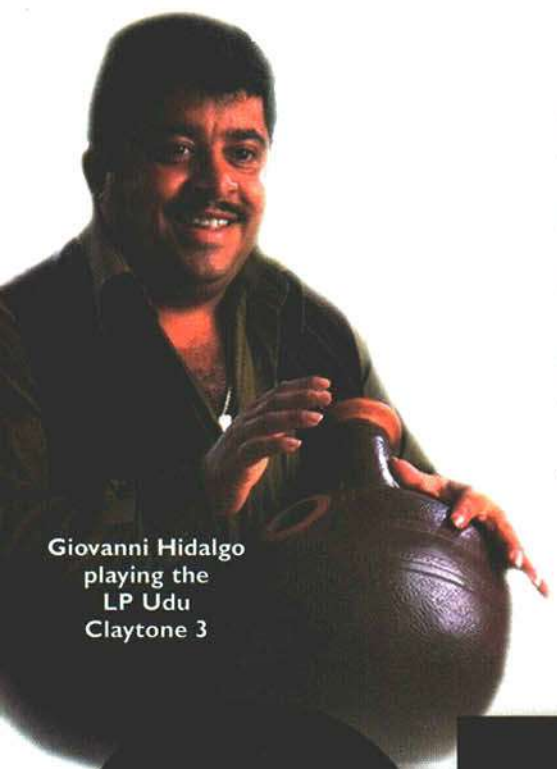
As we were approaching the end of the song, Keneally said that if there was anything else that I hadn't thrown in already to go ahead and go for it. It was so much fun and we were laughing like a couple of nine-year-olds. So I took a 4/4 bar and thought of it as 32/32.I took groups of thirteen notes and started on the second 32nd note, which set my pattern over the next thirty-one notes. Then I placed triplets inside each of the thirteen notes, which came out to be thirty-nine against thirty-one. When I do this type of thing I feel the notes musically and I get an image of a shape or a number, but I'm not counting while I'm playing.

MH: There are a lot of odd-meter tracks on the new Mullmuzzler/James LaBrie release. How has the rhythm knowledge method helped in creating working parts for the odd-meter material?

MM: It has allowed me to create freely without being burdened with counting.







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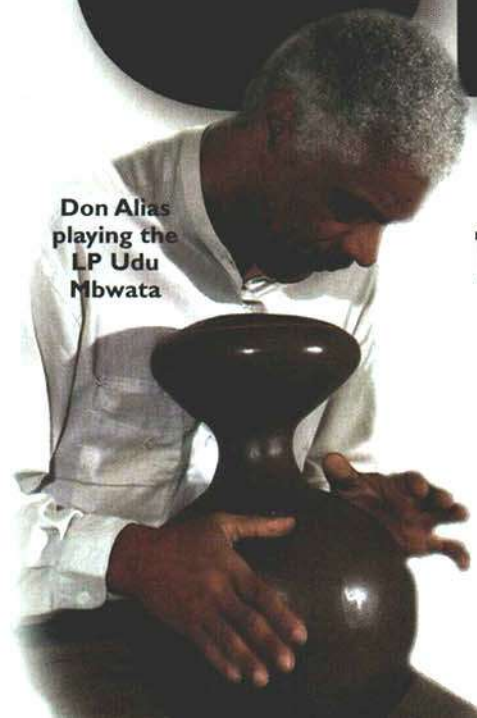
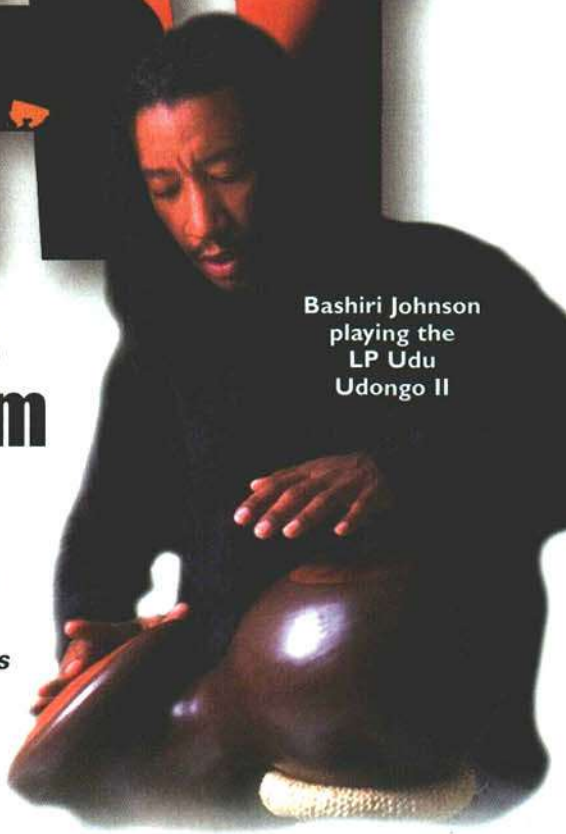


Don Alias playing the LP Udu Mbwata



Bashiri Johnson playing the LP Udu Udongo II

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This allows me to take an odd meter out as far as I want. I can feel 6/4, and if asked to, I can place seventeen notes against it. It has also taken away the fear of having to count. It's actually a joy to play with all of these numbers at this point.

MH: There are two tracks on the new Mullmuzzler release, "His Voice" and "Statued," where the speed and execution of certain fills are so quick that it's almost incomprehensible to the human ear.

MM: The fill in "Statued" was about 240 beats per minute and the opening fill in "His Voice" was 260 bpm. It's all a matter of practice and repetition. The fill at 260 bpm may never really be completely heard because of its quickness, but from a musical perspective it reflects the true energy I was feeling when I recorded those parts.

MH: The nice thing about your playing is that you don't abuse your ability to play fast or play bizarre parts. It seems to come out at just the appropriate times.

MM: I appreciate hearing that because I'm so used to people thinking that I'm going to go off in a song or worrying because my drumkit is so big. I never get a chance to play certain gigs strictly because they think my kit's too big. It's the music that matters most to me and that's all I'm concerned with when I play.

MH: On the new Steve Vai release, the tune "Windows To The Soul" is in 11/8, yet it grooves so smoothly. How did you create that part?

MM: I created my part from a glockenspiel part that Steve had written. Even though there's no speed demands involved with the track, I had to use every bit of my technical facility to be able to play that part for five minutes without any breaks. I chose what I felt were the primary notes from the glockenspiel part and played them on either a splash or a *Zil-Bel.* I also splashed both cable hi-hats. Some of the bass drum kicks had to be played with the left foot and others with the right, depending on which foot was operating a hi-hat.

MH: Can you talk a little about your solo project?

MM: It's called Chix & Stix. It's a pop groove vocal project with totally off-the-wall solo sections, where the drums are playing non-traditional ideas that are actually accompanied by keyboard patterns. It's more for fun and it's very entertaining, but it also allows me to do my thing as a drummer. I'm shopping for a deal for it. But my biggest goal right now is to continue performing clinics worldwide and to continue to turn people on to the rhythm knowledge system.

MH: Overall, what do you feel you've achieved by using your rhythm knowledge system?

MM: I now have a greater ability to learn information. The system has expanded my mind, allowing me to use other resources—my eyes, ears, sense of touch.... I'm now able to read through books that were beyond my understanding, like physics books. Now I love to read that kind of stuff. I can absorb the information, because when I read it I clearly imagine visual images. I get an understanding of why they're saying what they're saying. I can't rattle off the formulas, but I have an understanding of why they have them and how they work, and then decide whether it supports the thesis. Basically I've learned to store and recall information much better. And that's been beneficial to my drumming.

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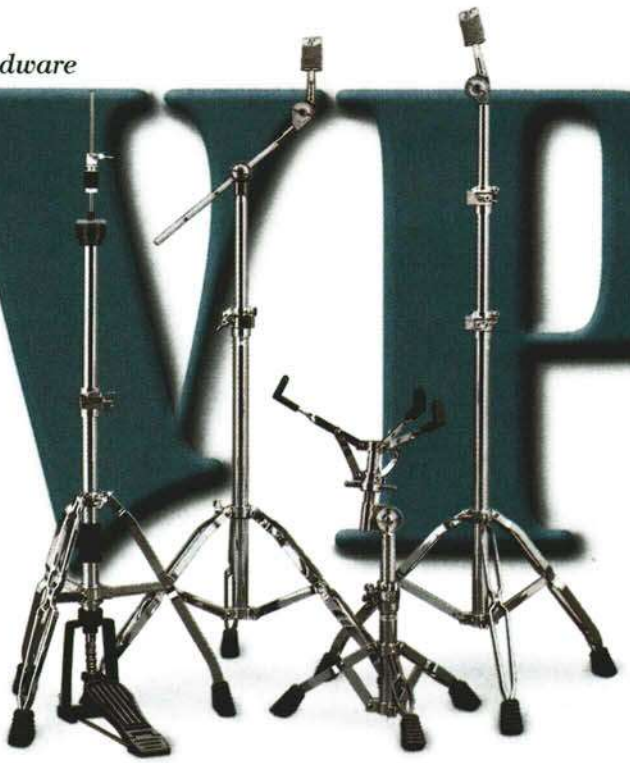

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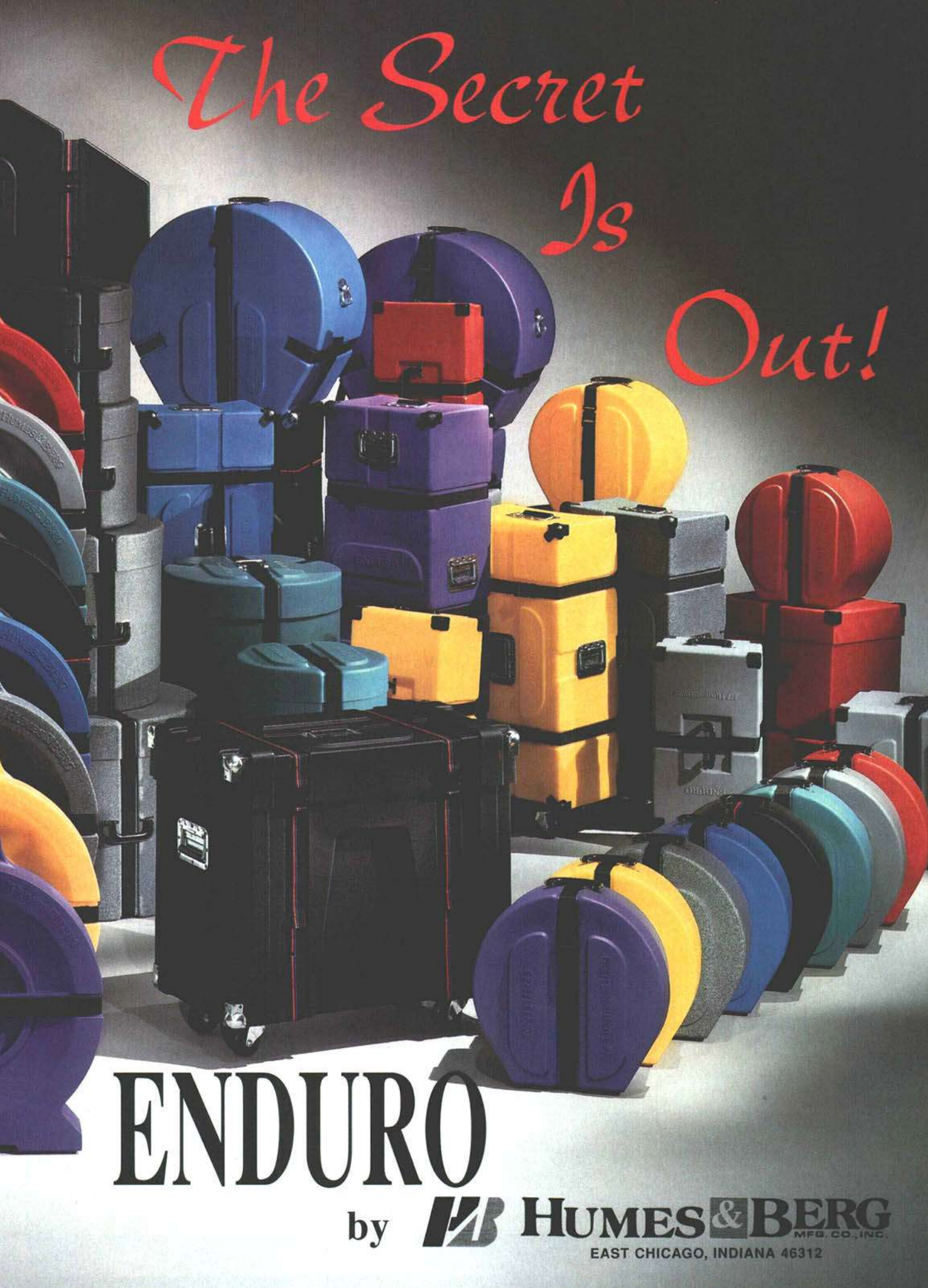
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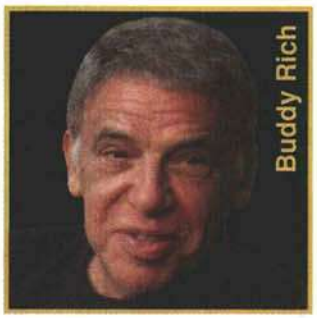

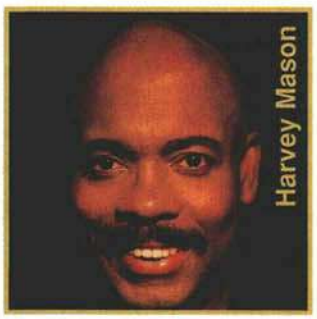

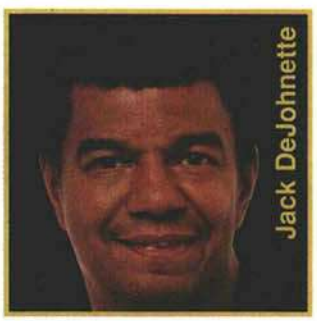

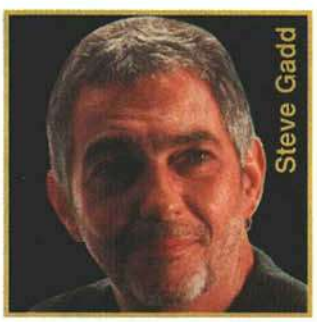

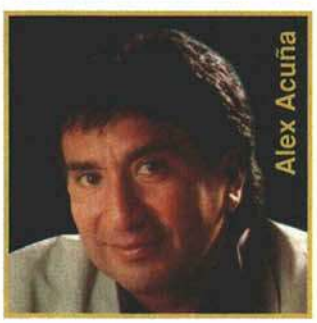

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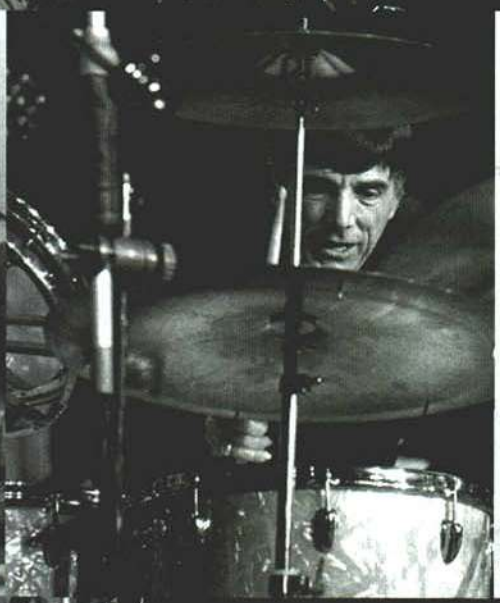
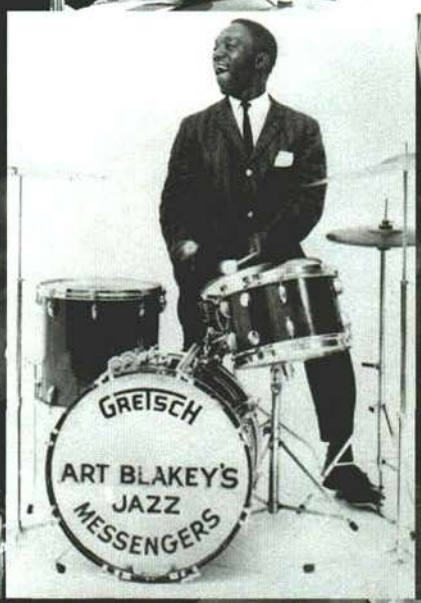
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The

the top 25

MD looks at the most influential drum solos

When we look back on our first inspirations to play drums, we often recall an important solo that piqued our interest. Gene Krupa heard Chick Webb and was blown away. Tony Williams heard Philly Joe Jones and Max Roach and was permanently affected. When a friend of Vinnie Colaiuta turned him on to Tony Williams, there was no looking back. Just about any progressive rock drummer playing today remembers his initial disbelief upon hearing Neil Peart's monstrous solos. And we can *all* remember the first time we saw Buddy Rich on TV.

Of course, as we matured as players, the importance of "the groove" became abundantly clear. But for most of us it was the drum solo that initially sent us looking for mom's pots and pans, then down the never-ending road toward drumming excellence.

This article presents, in chronological order, the drum solos we feel to be the most important in recorded history. Many of them come from hit recordings, which helped to give them wide-reaching influence. Others are less well known to the world at large, but are revered by drummers "in the know." Whether technically inspirational, musically influential, or just plain entertaining, however, *all* of these solos have brought the drums to the forefront of the music.

by Mark Griffith

Chick Webb: "Liza"

Chick Webb Big Band,
Spinnin' The Webb (1938)
Chick Webb was the first great drum soloist. His romping and explosive solos inspired Buddy Rich and Gene Krupa to become great soloists themselves and to lead a band from behind the drums. "Liza" comes from late in Webb's brief career and is a true classic. Also listen to his amazing solos on "My Wild Irish Rose" from his *King Of The Drums* album.

Gene Krupa: "Sing, Sing, Sing"

Benny Goodman,
Live At Carnegie Hall (1937)
This is the first combination of a hit tune and a drum solo—a rare union, indeed. Krupa's boyish good looks, charismatic showmanship, and amazing drumming skills made him hugely influential. At no time were these attributes captured better than on the legendary, driving tom-tom solo on "Sing, Sing, Sing."

Shadow Wilson: "Queer Street"

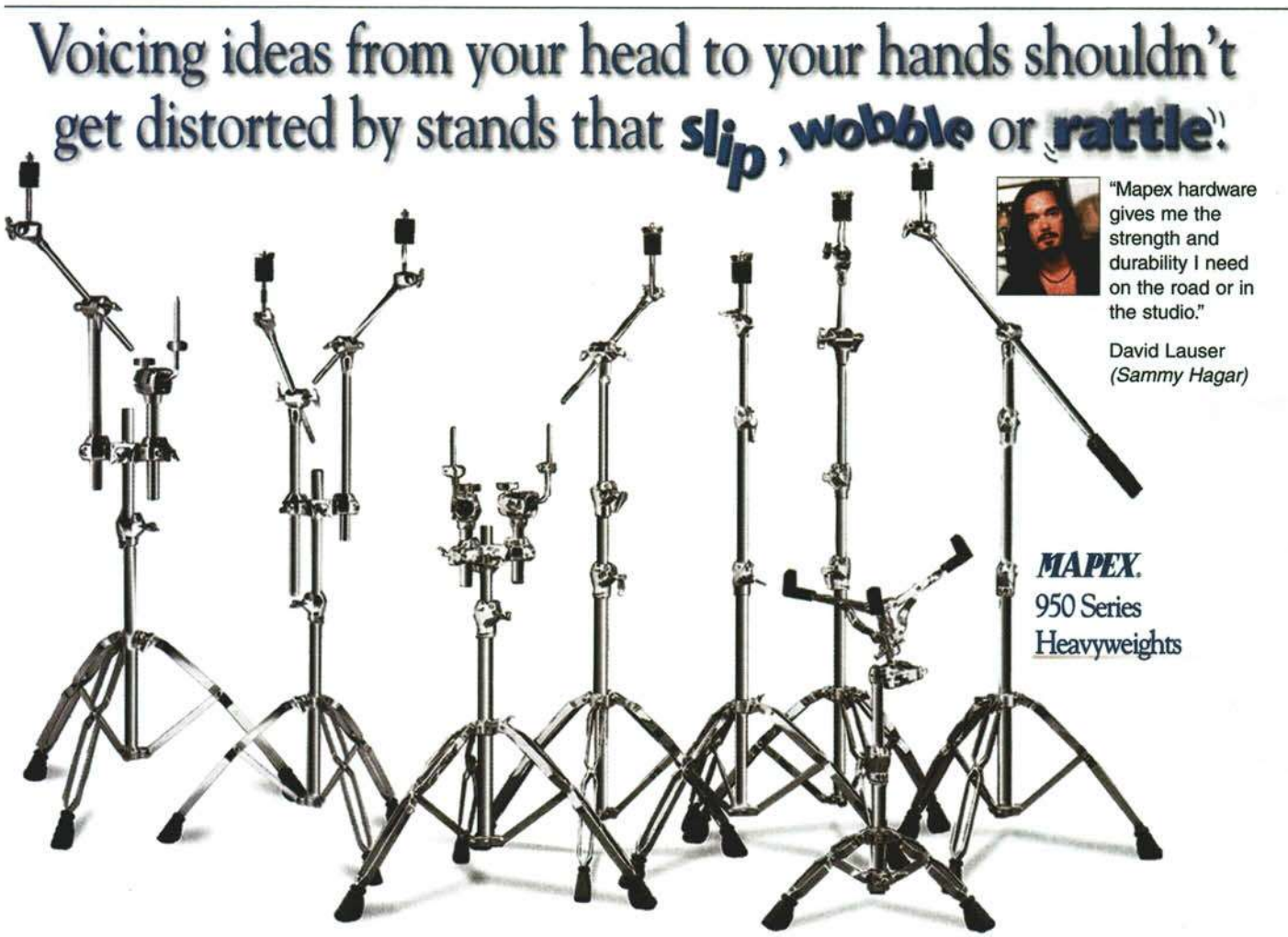
Count Basie, *Classics* (1946)
The two drum breaks from "Queer Street" have been cited by Buddy Rich as "the greatest drum fills ever played." Shadow was primarily known for his ultra-swinging time feel and deceptive simplicity. The exciting fills he played on "Queer Street" are fairly busy, and are not "typical" Shadow Wilson. But they are tasteful, creative, and *very* effective.

Cozy Cole: "Topsy, Part II"

Cozy Cole, *single* (1950)
Cozy Cole was one of the first drummers to successfully integrate military rudiments into the drumset. "Topsy" was released several times, and a 1958 recording of it became a hit, which is amazing considering that the tune was built around a drum solo. The song's popularity and Cole's influential approach make this an integral solo in drumming and music history. "Topsy, Part II" can be found on several compilations, including Rhino Records' *Let There Be Drums, Vol. 1.* Another important Cozy Cole solo is his feature with the Cab Calloway band, "Crescendo In Drums," from *Cab Calloway Featuring Chu Berry.*

Louie Bellson: "Skin Deep"

Duke Ellington, *Uptown* (1952)
Bellson's musical solo incorporates rudimental rolls (five-stroke, seven-stroke, etc.), hi-hat soloing techniques, heavy syncopation, and Louie's groundbreaking work with double bass drums. It's a well-composed tune penned by the drummer himself, performed to perfection by the Ellington band. Louie Bellson is a legend, and this solo is nothing short of legendary.



Max Roach: "Cherokee"

Clifford Brown & Max Roach, *Study In Brown* (1955)

Max Roach is *the* bebop drummer. His lightning-fast and melodic drum solo on "Cherokee" is the standard for all bebop drum solos and tempos. Arguably, equally important is his 1966 solo on *Drums Unlimited,* "The Drum Also Waltzes," considered to be one of the few legitimate drum solo *compositions* ever recorded. Roach's melodicism has permeated all styles of drumming and inspired scores of drummers.

Art Blakey; "Blues March"

Art Blakey & The Jazz Messengers, Moanin"(1958)

Art's traditional marching band repertoire and countoff create the foundation for this classic composition built around a drum solo. Blakey recorded other solos that were more adventurous, but this tune, with its "signature" solo and groove, is recognized worldwide as a milestone drum feature.

Philly Joe Jones: "Billy Boy"

Miles Davis, *Milestones* (1958)

The "fours" exchanged between Philly Joe Jones and pianist Red Garland here are widely thought of as the greatest ever recorded. Philly Joe carried the torch from Cozy Cole and is recognized as the drummer who completely and smoothly integrated the rudiments into the solo repertoire. This is Jones at his soloing best, from an album that Tony Williams declared to be "the perfect jazz recording."

Pete LaRoca: "Minor Apprehension"

Jackie McClean, *New Soil* (1959)

This is the first "free" drum solo ever recorded. It permanently changed the perception of drum solos and cleared the way for Elvin Jones, Tony Williams, and many others who would take extended "free-form" solos in the groups of Miles Davis, Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor, and John Coltrane. This is a monumentally important and influential solo in the jazz drumming tradition.

Joe Morello: "Take Five"

Dave Brubeck Quartet, *Time Out (1959)*

Again we have an influential drum solo featured in a hit tune. It's also one of the first times we hear a solo constructed over a musical vamp. Morello's drumming on this 5/4 classic is uniquely spacious and contains long melodic phrases. Joe's solo was listener-friendly, while remaining highly creative and inspirational to legions of drumming fans.

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Sandy Nelson: "Let There Be Drums"

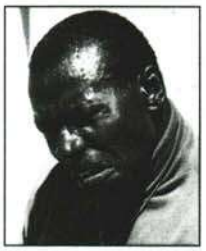
Sandy Nelson,
Let There Be Drums/Drums Are... (1960)

This popular hit is part of the "surf music" tradition. While the solo featured here isn't technically advanced, it has a great groove. That's why teenagers loved to dance to "Let There Be Drums," and why, in the process, many were also inspired to play drums. While this is probably the least challenging solo on our list, it's one of the most influential.

Ron Wilson: "Wipeout"

The Surfaris,
Wipeout: The Best Of The Surfaris (1963)

This drum solo defined a tune, a style of music, and a lifestyle that *itself* defined an entire generation. Never has a drum solo been more important to American popular culture than this one. Its popularity influenced many young people to become drummers, and it inspired many of *them* to forget their "assigned" lessons and venture into the celebrated world of the drum solo.



Elvin Jones: "The Drum Thing"

John Coltrane Quartet, *Crescent* (1964)

While Elvin's "rolling triplet" soloing style is documented on quite a few recordings, this haunting tune was based around a *magical* drum solo (played with mallets) that bends and extends bar lines as only Elvin could. Elvin rumbles, bashes, and crashes to create a solo whose rippling influence is still being felt today.

Tony Williams: "Agitation"

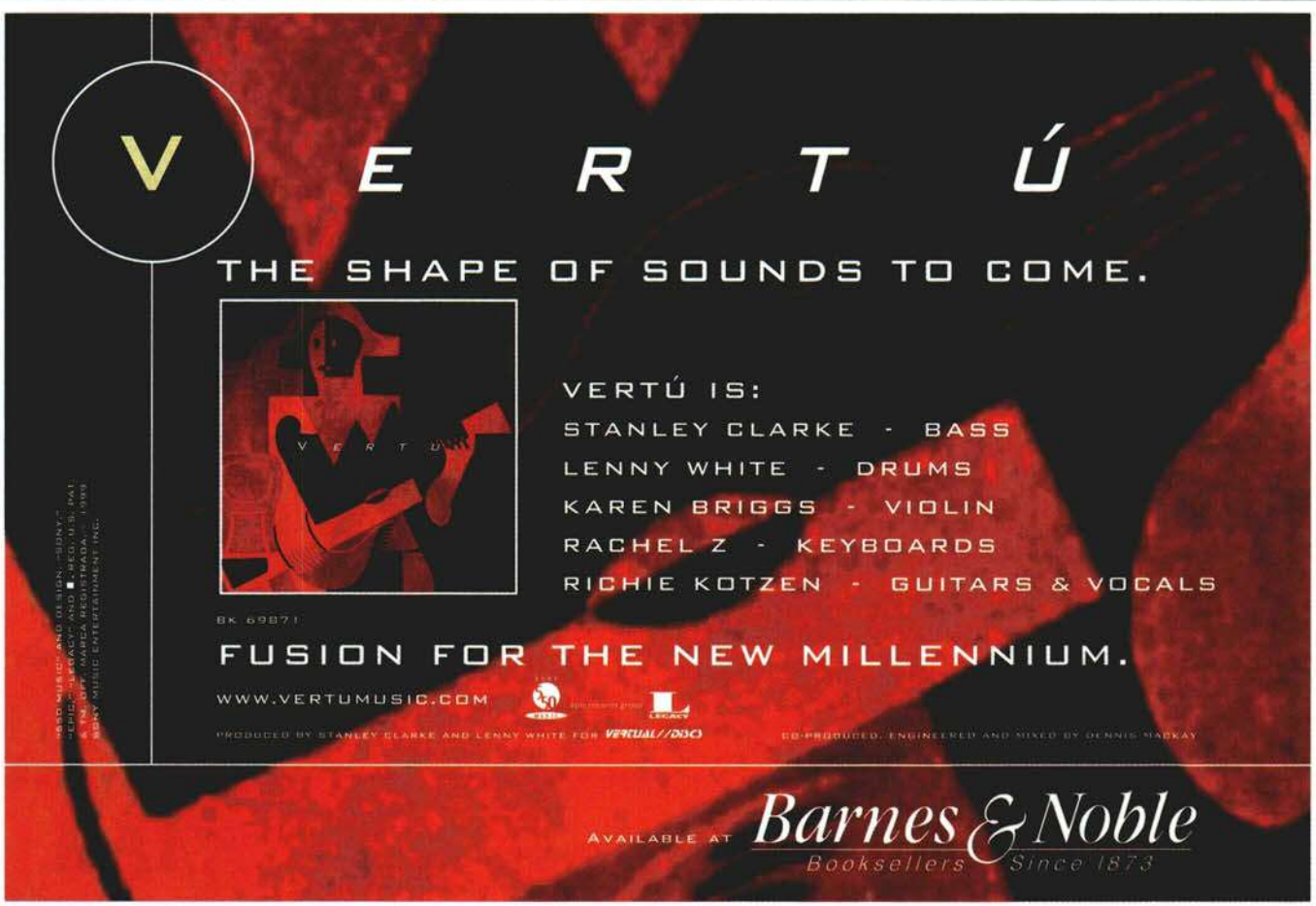
Miles Davis, *ESP (1*965)

This free-form drum solo contains all of Tony's early soloing trademarks. Williams' rubato approach here flows in and out of time to clearly create one of the most creative solos ever recorded. Few of his recorded solos turned the drumming community on its ear more than this one. Without question, Tony Williams' drumming inspired players to push the boundaries of modern drumming.

Ginger Baker: 'Toad"

Cream, *Wheels Of Fire* (live),
Fresh Cream (studio) (1966)

Ginger Baker took the torch from Tony and Elvin, and lit an inferno with "Toad," *the* original extended rock 'n' roll drum feature. Ginger executed a great deal of polymetric interplay between his hands and double bass



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drums, and thereby motivated countless drummers to add a second bass drum to their kits. Baker also stretched the bar lines and broke up the time like the modern jazz drummers, inspiring many who followed him to further push the boundaries of rock drumming.

Buddy Rich: "Channel One Suite"

Buddy Rich, *Mercy, Mercy, Mercy* (1966)

Buddy Rich is simply the most influential and popular drummer ever. His amazing extended drum solos inspired more drummers than those of every other drummer combined. This solo—in tandem with the one on "West Side Story Medley" from Buddy's *Swingin' New Big Band*—are the most legendary and awe-inspiring ever recorded, from the greatest drummer ever.

Roy Haynes: "Matrix"

Chick Corea,
Now He Sings, Now He Sobs (1968)

Haynes is the father of modern jazz drumming. His groundbreaking solos combine space, melodicism, rhythmic flow, and creativity. And his aggressive soloing voice has continually inspired musicians ever since he hit the music scene in the 1940s. The twelve-bar exchanges featured on "Matrix," played between Chick and Roy, are classic.

Ron Bushy: "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida"

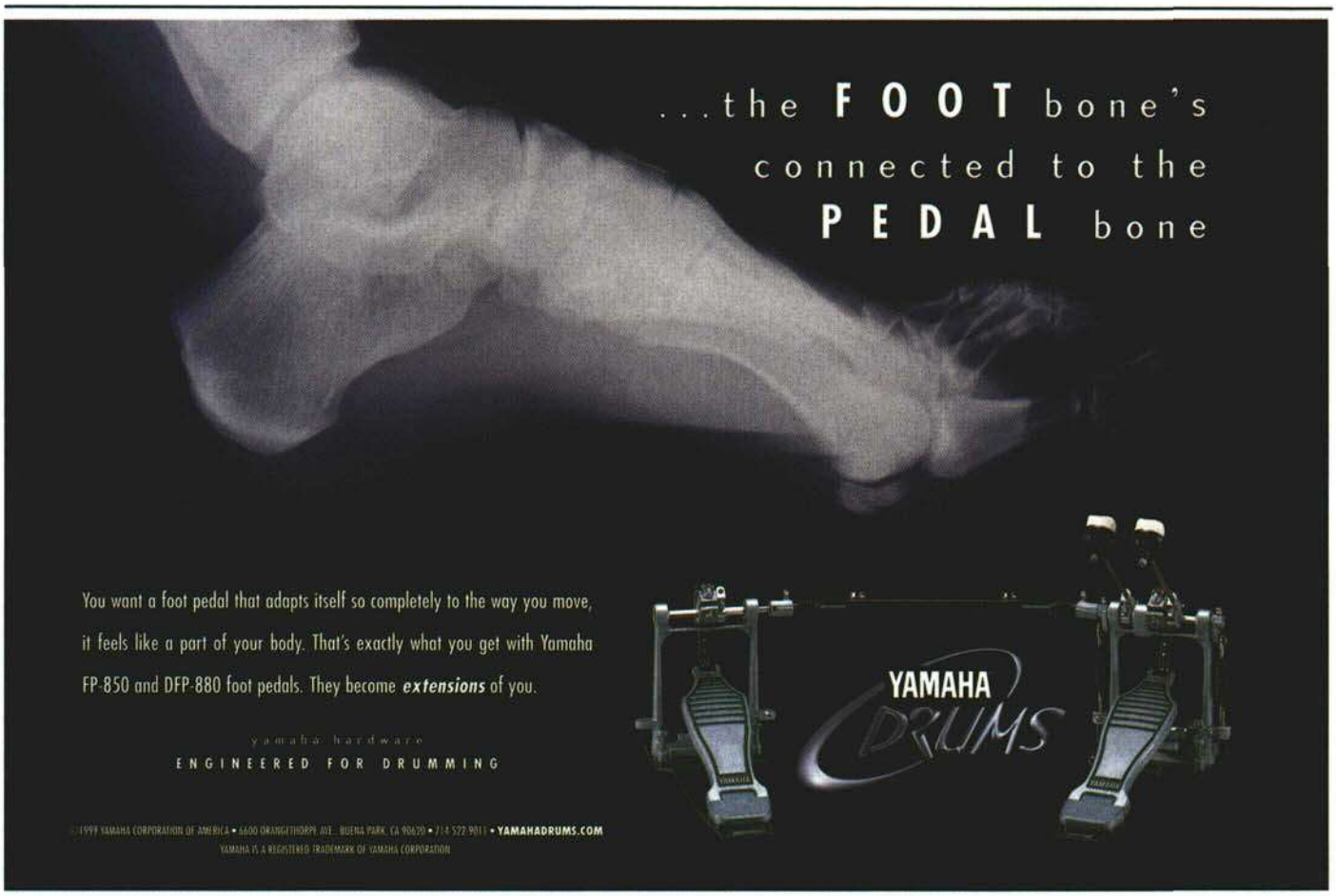
Iron Butterfly,
In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida (1968)

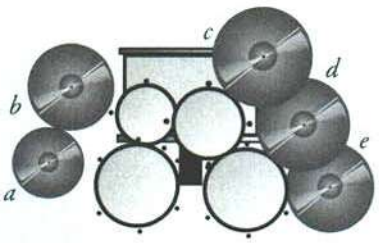
This psychedelic heavy rock anthem features one of the most notorious extended drum solos ever, complete with flanged tom-toms, a thumping bass drum, and big crashing cymbals. Bushy didn't break any new ground here, and this cut may sound dated—and bear the brunt of several "drum solo jokes"—but like it or not, it's the most famous drum solo of the psychedelic period.

Ringo Starr: "The End"

The Beatles, *Abbey Road* (1969)

Like everything Ringo Starr played, this popular drum break from the classic *Abbey Road* album—Ringo's only recorded "solo"—was tasteful and perfect for the tune. For a drummer remembered as much for what he *didn't* play as for what he did, this is a pretty cool performance. The Beatles were more than just a band, and Ringo was more than just a drummer; "The End" hints at his incalculable influence.





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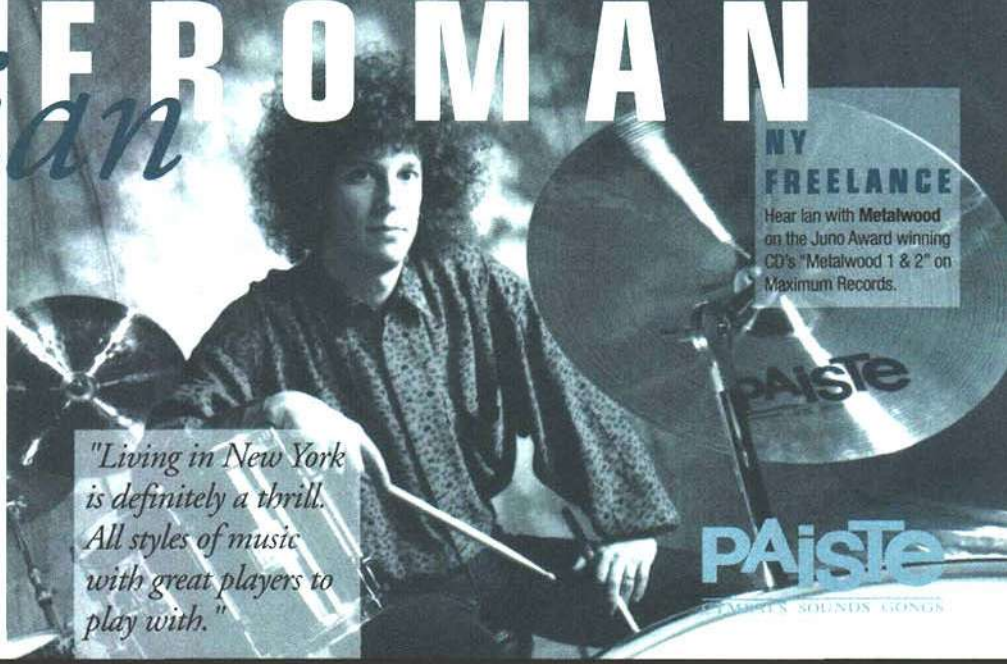

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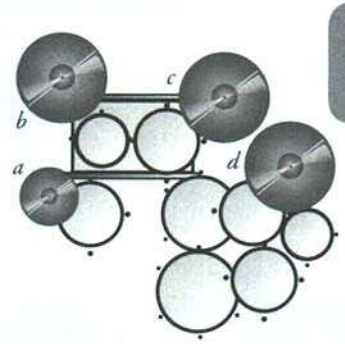

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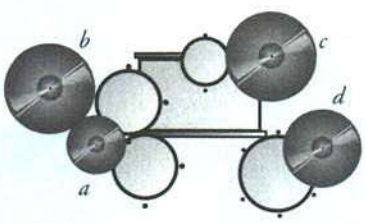

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John Bonham: "Moby Dick"

Led Zeppelin, *Led Zeppelin II* (1969)

The original and most influential hard rock drummer, "Bonzo" at his best is on display on "Moby Dick." John was known as much for his relentless and creative grooves as for his solos, and this is one of the only recorded examples of his prowess in this department. John was the first rock drummer to play with his hands (without sticks), and one of the first to put a tambourine on his hi-hats, both of which are in evidence here. "Moby Dick" is exciting, funky, creative, and entertaining, and like Bonham himself, larger than life.

Billy Cobham: "One Word"

Mahavishnu Orchestra,
Birds OfFire (1973)

The solo—not to mention the grooves—on this classic recording inspired many of today's most admired drummers. Billy Cobham's ultra-clean single strokes, pounding double bass drums, and sheer virtuosity behind the drumset are legendary. Cobham's also a soloing *machine,* and on "One Word" the machine shifts into overdrive.

Terry Bozzio: "The Black Page"

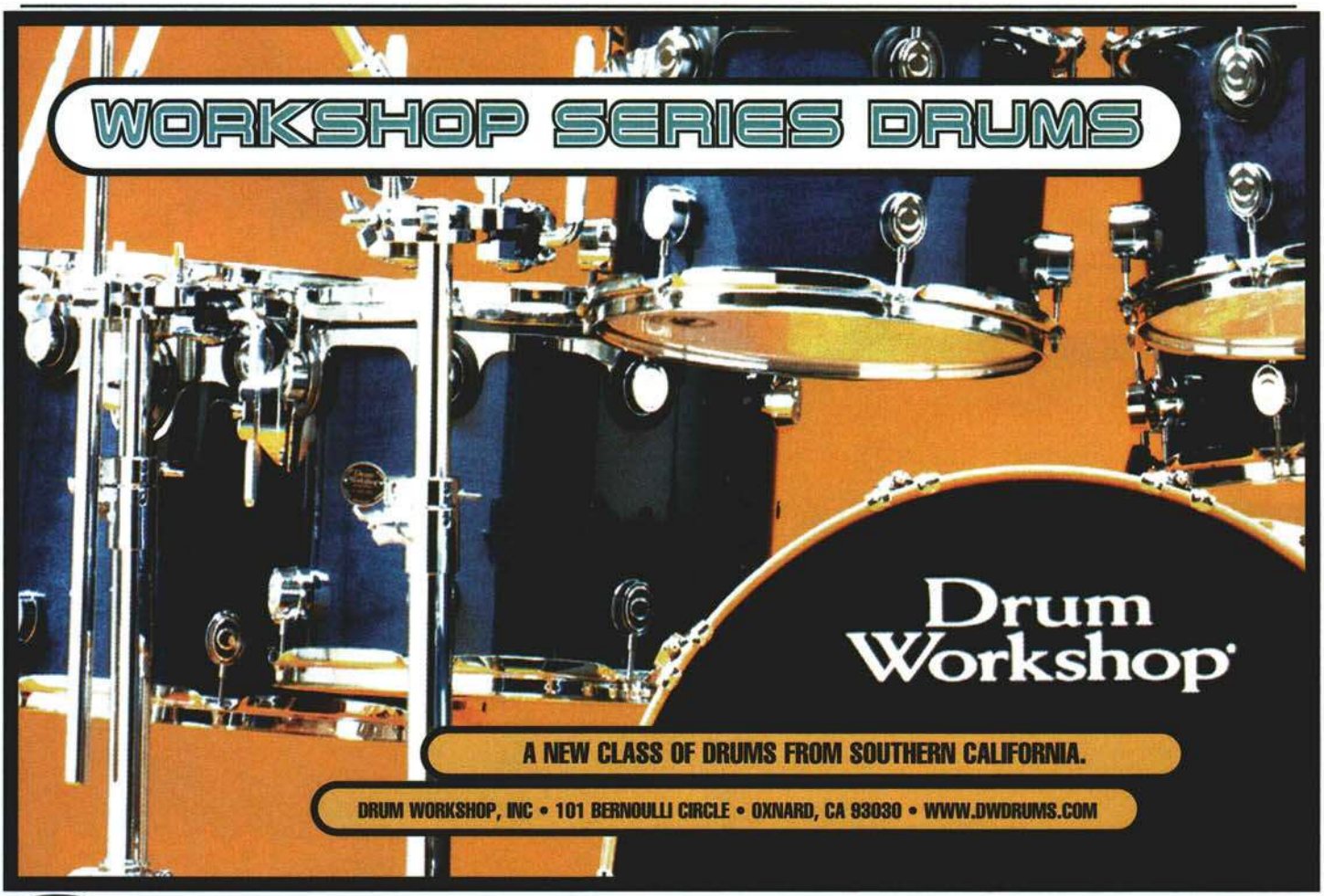
Frank Zappa, *Zappa In New York* (1977)

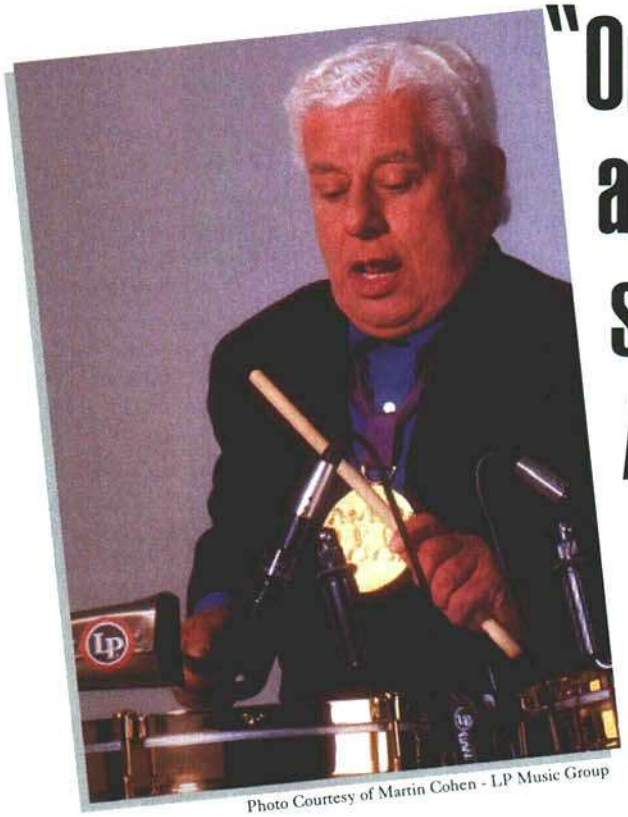
Zappa's fusion of twentieth-century classical music, rock 'n' roll attitude, and musical virtuosity are completely conveyed by this legendary drum solo. In fact, this "drum solo composition" documented a new rhythmic vocabulary for all drumset artists to further investigate and digest. Bozzio's over-the-top solo style combines the previous solo approaches into one ferocious and beautiful concept that began with "The Black Page" and continues to this day with his breathtaking solo drumming pieces.

Steve Gadd: "Aja"

Steely Dan, *Aja* (1977)

Here's one of the most recognized drum solos ever recorded. This Steely Dan composition received awards and got tons of airplay, but it was Gadd's legendary outro solo (rumored to have been done in one take) that simultaneously inspired drummers and entertained popular music listeners the world over. Steve Gadd has never played a meaningless note in his life, and this solo is a tapestry of uncannily meaningful ideas.





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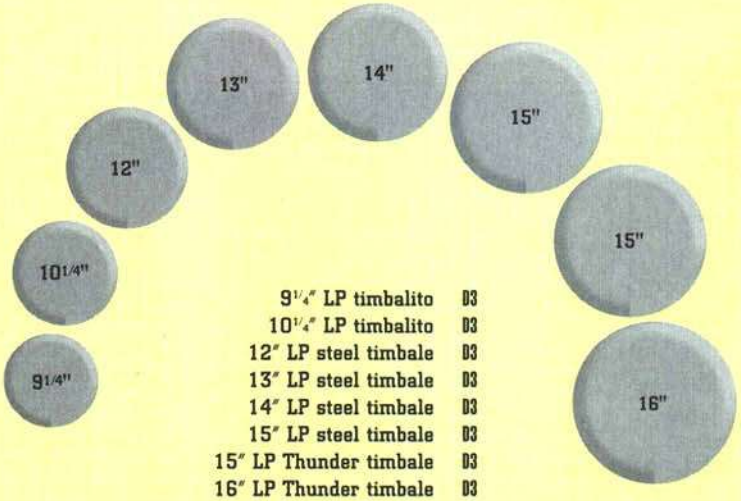

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When the phrase "Latin percussion" comes up, one name stands out: Tito Puente, the king of Latin music.

Tito's career in music spans half a century, beginning in East Harlem, where he was influenced by the boleros and rumbas in his Latino neighborhood and the great swing bands of the day. A legendary percussionist, orchestra director, arranger and showman, Tito has received four Grammy® awards and 10 Grammy® nominations, as well as a Smithsonian Medal of Honor and Lifetime Achievement Award.

His numerous recordings and compositions, including "Top Percussion", "Tito in Percussion" and "Cuban Carnival", have become classics to Latin music aficionados around the world. His songs "Oye Come Va" and "Para los Rumberos" have been recorded by rock legend Carlos Santana.

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Honorable Mentions

Where to draw the line? Well, many great contributions to the drum solo tradition were certainly strongly considered for our list, including Joe Dukes' melodic solo on Jack McDuff's hit "Soulful Drums" (from *Screamin'*), Carl Palmer's solo on "Karn Evil 9" (from ELP's *Brain Salad Surgery*), Kenny Aronoff's effective and influential break in "Jack And Dianne" (from John Mellencamp's *American Fool), and* Dave Weckl's solo on "Step It" (from Bill Connors' *Step It* release). And what about Phil Collins' entrance on "In The Air Tonight" (from Face *Value*), perhaps the most famous bar of drumming in modern popular music. Also hard to exclude were the Krupa & Rich exchanges on "King Porter Stomp" (from *The Drum Rattle*).

Of course, we had to ponder the solo contributions of Keith Moon, Simon Phillips, Jack DeJohnette, Rod Morgenstein, Tito Puente, Billy Higgins, Lars Ulrich, Bill Bruford, Steve Smith, Lennie White, and Shelly Manne. We even thought about including three complete drum recordings: the original 1959 drum battle *Rich Vs. Roach,* Jack DeJohnette's *Pictures,* and Olatunji's hugely influential *Drums Of Passion.*

And finally, many younger artists' solos couldn't be ignored. For sure, in future stories we'll give *all* these performances their due. But for now, let's simply honor these 25 *amazing* documents of solo drumming, and appreciate their enormous impact on every drummer who ever goes beyond the beat.

Neil Peart: "YYZ"

Rush, *Exit Stage Left* (1981)

Simply put, Neil Peart is the most influential progressive rock drummer of all time. And to fans who attended Rush's performances, Peart's melodic solos weren't just drum solos, they were *events.* This particular extended solo, from the classic live recording *Exit Stage Left,* utilized every part of Peart's massive drumset, which also included a lot of percussion. No rock drummer since John Bonham has made the kind of impact on the drum world that Neil has, and this popular and complex solo captures Peart's influence at its peak.

Vinnie Colaiuta: "All Blues"

Los Lobotomys, Los *Lobotomys* (1989)

Vinnie stole the show on this performance of Miles Davis's classic the second that he look his first (of four) eight-bar solos. This record—and these solos—have earned a huge cull following among drummers and fusion fans alike. Vinnie does just about everything you can think of inside of eight bars, and ten years later we're *still* trying to recover from the amazing playing he did here.

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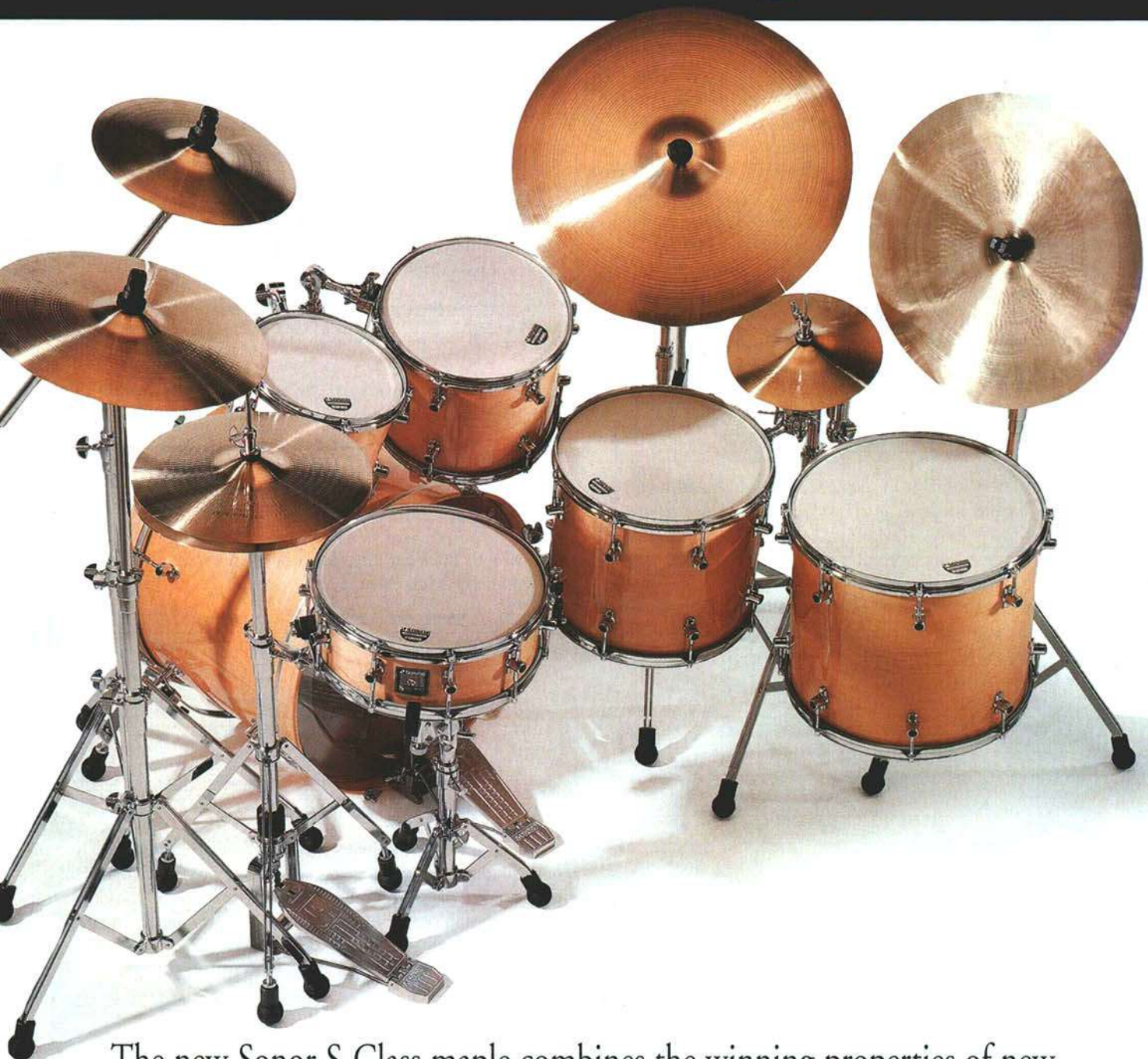

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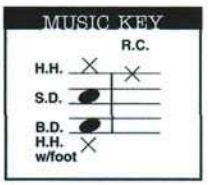
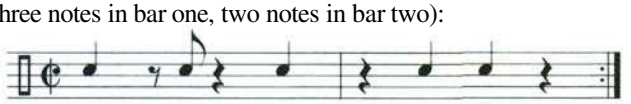
Developing Left-Foot Clave

by Roger Odell

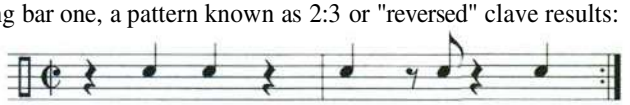


One of the more recent developments in drumkit technique is the increasing use of the hi-hat pedal foot in an independent way. With the advent of the cowbell bass pedal mount, or *Gajate Bracket,* all drummers can now explore ideas that have previously been the domain of the Latin or contemporary jazz player.

For those who are unfamiliar with the concept of clave, it will be useful to outline the three rhythmic patterns that will be explored in this article. "Son" clave is the basic form of clave from which all the others are derived. This is normally presented in a two-bar, cut-time format, referred to as 3:2 or "forward" clave (three notes in bar one, two notes in bar two):



By starting the pattern with the second measure and then playing bar one, a pattern known as 2:3 or "reversed" clave results:



Both of these can be "reduced" by essentially halving the value of each note and rest to produce one-bar phrases. (This approach will be helpful later on when we apply it to drumset patterns.)

3:2 Son Clave

2:3 Son Clave

Now let's look at other forms of clave in the same manner.

3:2 Rumba Clave

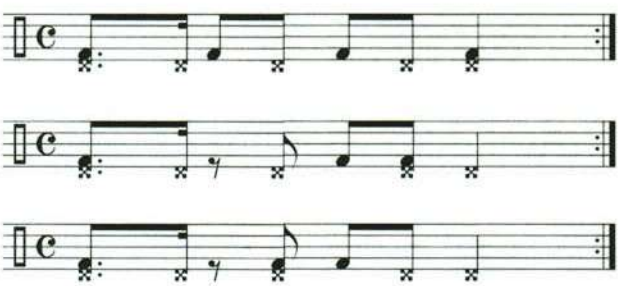
2:3 Rumba Clave

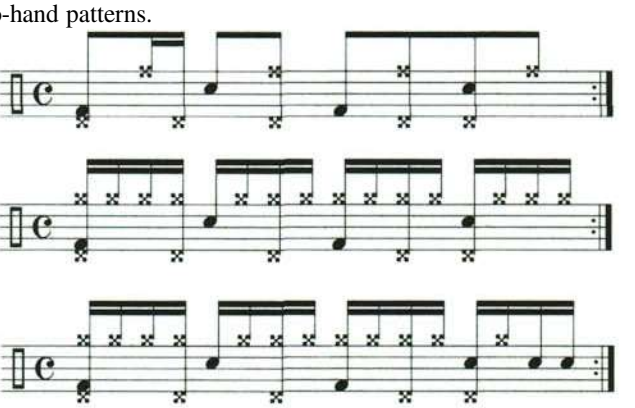
3:2 Bossa Nova Clave

2:3 Bossa Nova Clave

Taking the 3:2 son clave as a starting point, play the following pattern with your left foot on the hi-hat and introduce a simple two-beat bass drum figure.

When you have these parts "synced up," play an 8th-note ride cymbal line, and then add the standard left-hand snare part.

Now let's consider three other bass drum patterns to be integrated with the 3:2 son clave.

You can also experiment with different ride patterns, like offbeat 8th notes or 16th notes. For instance, if you have a spare bass pedal and cowbell bracket to use for your left foot, loosen your hi-hat clutch and play the 16th-note hi-hat parts as alternating hand-to-hand patterns.

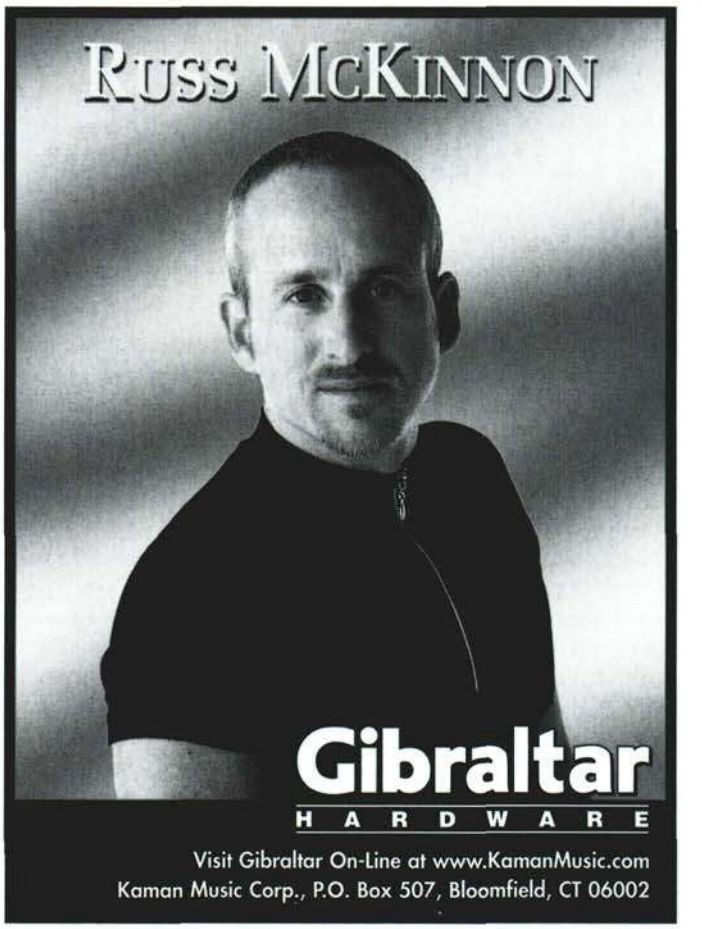


Now's a good time to go back and repeat all of the above variations with the alternate clave patterns. For example, use the 2:3 rumba clave with the last bass drum pattern and an off-beat ride:

Another interesting coordination challenge is to play "forward" clave in the bass drum with "reverse" clave in the left foot, omitting the bass where it coincides with the snare. The bossa nova clave with hand-to-hand 16ths produces this groove:

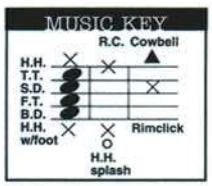
This last example uses a non-traditional clave pattern with a simple funk bass drum.

Don't let the antics of monster left-foot clave experts like Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez and Akira Jimbo put you off. You can introduce another color into your grooves in a relatively simple way—*and* without the need for extensive brain surgery!



Becoming A Working Drummer, Part 3

by Russ McKinnon



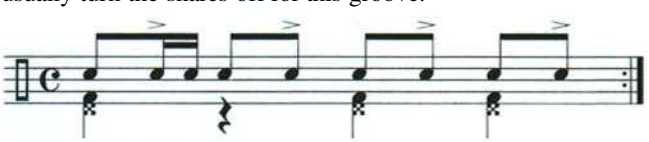
In Part 1 of this series, I stressed the importance of learning many different grooves and styles so you wouldn't have a musical "Achilles heel." You never know what you may be asked to play on the bandstand or in the studio. You should know the differences between certain feels.

Many times the differences between similar styles are quite subtle. It's a big part of your job to know these subtleties! And please keep in mind, nothing beats listening to live bands and recordings of the "real thing" when learning a style that's new to you.

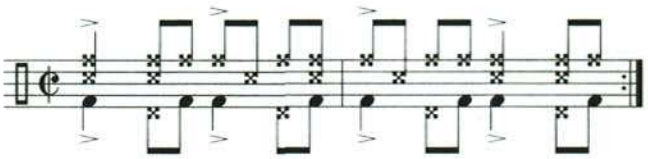
Let's explore the "working" grooves listed in the first article of this series. Although many beats have variations, I've tried to write them in their most basic forms, which should serve you well in a working situation. When playing some of the Latin and Afro-Cuban grooves, remember that what you play on the drumset will vary if you're working with one or more percussionists.

So, do you recall my question from Part 1? "Can you, right now, sit down and demonstrate the differences between the following grooves? Bossa vs. beguine; samba vs. rumba; ska vs. reggae; songo vs. conga; merengue vs. mambo; cha cha vs. cumbia; waltz vs. Viennese waltz; shuffle vs. Texas shuffle; train vs. two beat; tango vs. tarantella." Well, for those of you who can't, here are those grooves.

The basic **bossa nova** is played with a straight-8th-note feel, usually at a medium tempo. This beat most often utilizes the cross-stick across the snare drum with the snares either on or off. Try moving the right hand from the hi-hat part to the ride cymbal for the chorus or bridge section of the song (playing 2 and 4 with your left foot on the hi-hat).

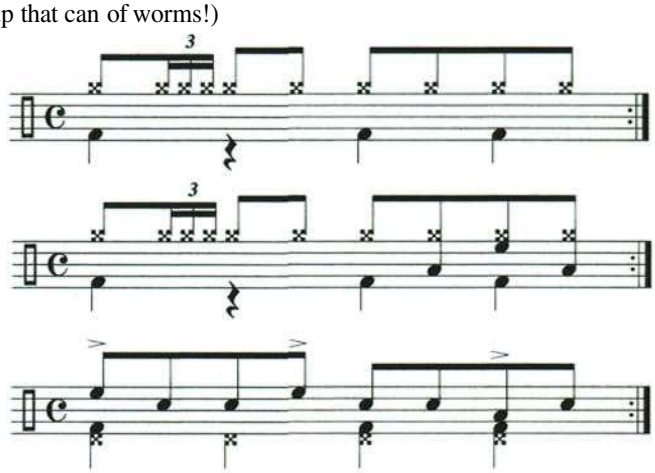
The simple **beguine,** also performed at a moderate tempo, is characterized by its off-beat accents in the hands along with the driving pulse in the feet. Both hands play on the snare drum. I usually turn the snares off for this groove.

Samba is a Brazilian rhythm that has many variations and interpretations on the kit. It should always be played with a medium-tempo 16th-note two feel. The drumset player's job is to emulate many drummers and percussionists at once, so there's quite a bit of freedom once you learn the basic groove.

Be careful not to play this pattern too fast. Also, for a more authentic sound, try accenting beat 2 of each bar on a low or middle tom to simulate the surdo drum that helps drive the traditional samba groove.



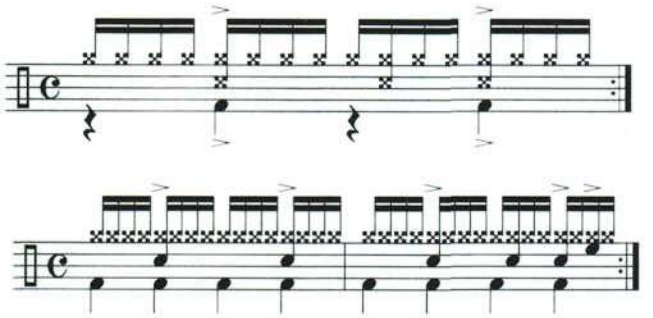
The next example is more like a **samba batucada** (rhythm jam session). Turn off the snares to emulate a pendeiro. The toms emulate two surdos.

The **rhumba** (similar to and sometimes called a "bolero") is a rhythm that is usually played for slower tempos or Latin ballads. I've written three examples that should serve you well. In the second and third examples play the tom notes with the right hand (and turn the snares off). Be careful not to confuse rhumba with the Cuban folkloric dance rhythms of "rumba." (Trust me, we don't have nearly enough space, and I have no authority, to open up that can of worms!)



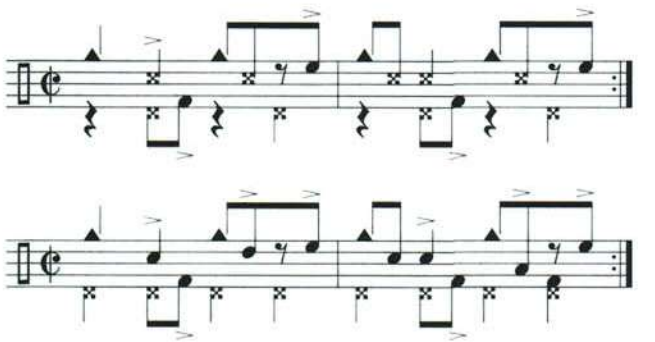
The most important thing when playing basic **reggae** is the big "drop" on beats 2 and 4. The drop is usually nothing more than an accented bass drum note. The hi-hat is normally played one-handed with a tight 8th-note or 16th feel and often with an accent on every "&." The tempo is usually moderate (80-96 bpm) and mellow—think of the islands, mon! At faster tempos, the bass drum drives on all four beats. Feel free to ad-lib with the hands, but

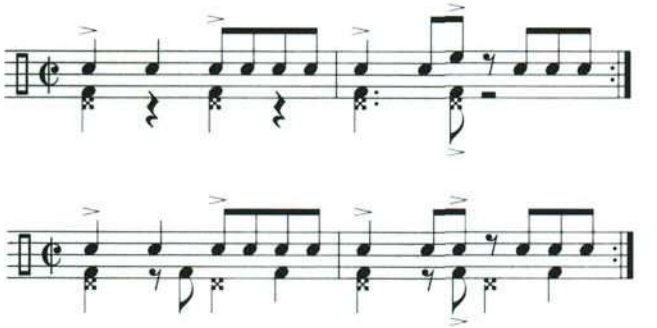
don't lose the groove! (Here is a common reggae groove and a variation.)

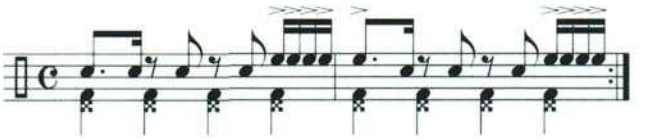


Ska is a much brighter (150-172 bpm), propelling groove with a "four" pulse in the bass drum and a snare usually on 2 and 4, unless a half-time feel is required. The tight hi-hat is often played two-handed at fast tempos. Feel free to change up the driving 8th-note hi-hat rhythm with occasional 16th notes. Experiment with timbale-type fills on high toms.

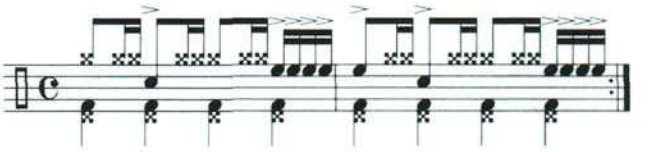
Songo is a hybrid rhythm that evolved from Cuban Carnival rhythms and American rhythm & blues. In its basic form, songo is characterized most by its cowbell pulse, offset bass drum, and syncopated snare. Once you're comfortable playing the basic groove, open up and orchestrate the left hand around the kit, as in the second example.



Conga is a completely different rhythm played with a "two" feel and is most distinguished by its heavily accented "bump" in the second bar of the repeated two-bar pattern. The appropriate tempo is allegro, a bright walking tempo. Snares are usually off. There are other variations to this groove, but these two patterns should serve you well.

The **merengue** is usually played quite quickly and is most distinguished by the four accented 16th notes on a tom at the end of the pattern. I play this first example with the snares off.



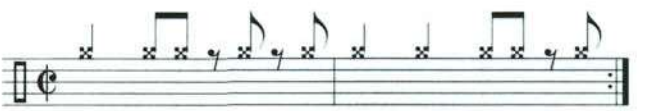
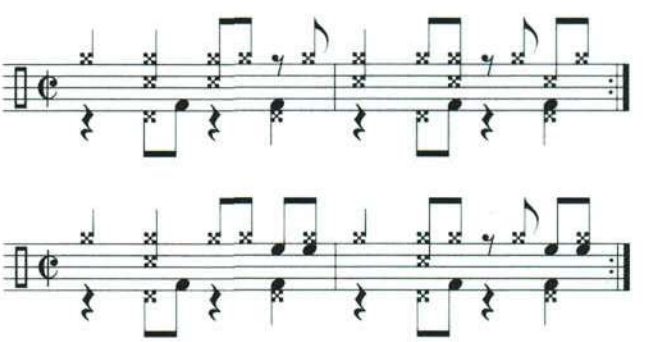
A more contemporary version of merengue uses both hands alternating on the hi-hat and snare backbeat.



You need to understand the clave and cascara rhythms before playing what most people call a **mambo.** First, learn the two basic kinds of clave.

Son Clave

Rumba Clave

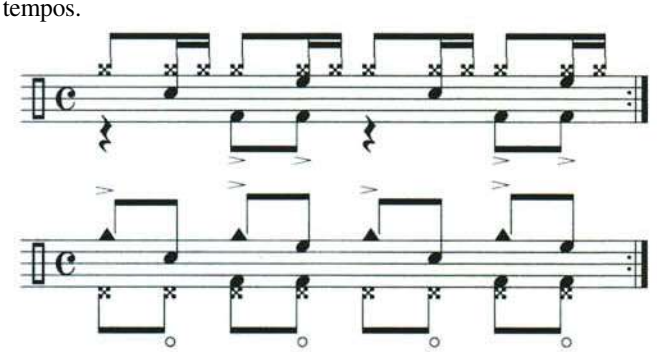
Here's the cascara rhythm, which is actually like a ride pattern for mambo.

The traditional mambo on the kit combines the clave and cascara rhythms in the hands. In the first example below, the right and left hands, respectively, play cascara and son clave in the 2:3 (reverse) direction.

Clave can be played with cross-stick on the snare, while the cascara rhythm can be played on a closed hi-hat or on the side of a drum. (The floor tom shell works well.) The unique bass drum placement emulates the rhythm the bass guitar is usually playing. And once you're comfortable with the basics, orchestrate the snare hand around the kit on toms, bells, or whatever you like.

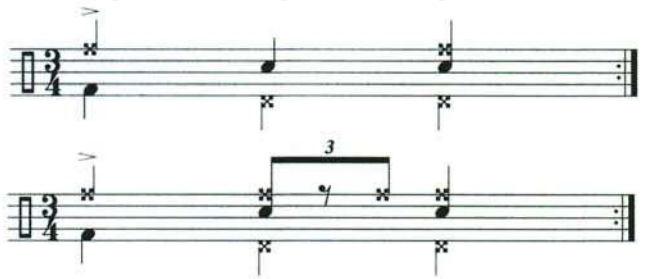
In its simplest working form, the **cha cha** is a one-bar, repeating

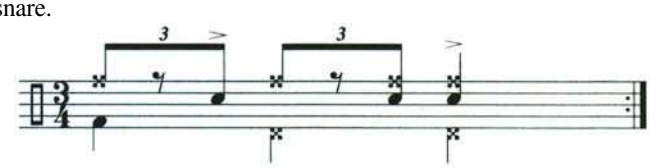
rhythm characterized by its cowbell pulse on all four beats. If there's no conguero, you can play the optional 8th note (in parentheses) on the high tom. The left hand plays cross-stick on the snare and the tom notes. The right hand plays the cowbell.

To achieve a fuller sound, turn the snares off and use the alternate right-hand figure below, which plays 8th notes between the cowbell and muted snare drum. (Rest your left hand on the snare drum head to mute the notes played by the right hand.)

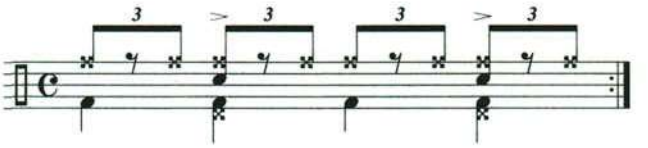
The **cumbia** is a popular rhythm in music from Central America. The bass drum pattern is what most makes this rhythm unique. Try using a cowbell on the chorus of the tune and continue the hi-hat voice with the feet. (See the second example.) A cumbia is most often played at medium-slow to moderate-dance tempos.

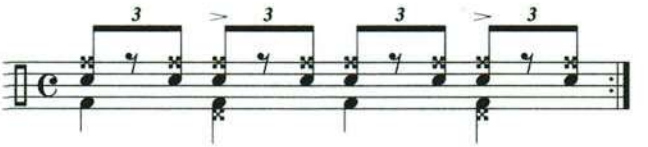


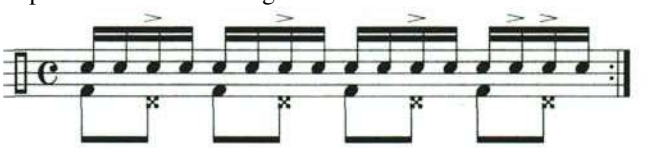
The simple **waltz** is often played with brushes or lightly with sticks and with a legato "one" feel. This 3/4 dance style is flowing and graceful. The allegro tempo is very important. In a dance band situation be careful not to play the traditional waltz too fast! (The second example features an optional cymbal pattern.)

A Viennese waltz differs from a traditional waltz in that it has much more of a swing feel to it. Note the accented notes on the snare.



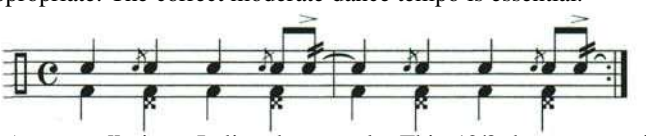
I think of the traditional **shuffle** as a light, swing-style groove. Bass drum notes are "feathered"—played softly as to be felt more than heard—and can be played with a "two" or a "four" feel. The basic "jump swing" style can be played this way, usually at a bright dance tempo.



A Texas shuffle, sometimes called a double shuffle, is more of a driving "power" shuffle. Play the bass drum more aggressively. The snare hand doubles the shuffle rhythm and heavily accents beats 2 and 4.

A train beat is common in country & western music. It's distinguished by 16th notes on the snare drum, which emulate a locomotive train in motion (boom, chugga, boom, chugga, boom, chugga, boom). Try playing this groove using *Blastix* or brushes on the snare to achieve a more flowing sound. When played in four, the snare accents are on the "&s" with the snares turned on. Tempos are moderate to bright.



A basic **two beat** is sometimes played very straight but is most often played with a swing feel. This simple rhythm has a "down-up" or "uhm-pa" feel and allows very little freedom to deviate from the traditional beat. Many different kinds of music styles use the two beat feel.

The tango is a very simple beat not unlike a strict march. The snare roll at the end of the measure must be accented strongly to get the proper feel. Variation from the basic beat is not usually appropriate. The correct moderate dance tempo is essential.

A tarantella is an Italian dance style. This 12/8 drum groove is also quite easy and similar to a shuffle. Snares are on. Performance tempo should be allegro (about 110-120 bpm).

There are, of course, other grooves that one needs to know to be a versatile drummer, but these should give you a good start. First know your grooves! Now go out there and get those gigs!

Russ McKinnon is best known for recording and touring with legendary horn band Tower Of Power. His solid playing led to his being honored five straight years in the funk category of Modern Drummer's *Readers' Poll. Russ remains very active in the Los Angeles music scene, and he's also very much in demand as a clinician.*

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Pata-Fla-Fla Madness

by Chet Doboe

Before the "bla bla bla" about how cool the pata-fla-fla is and how it can be used to excite your drumming, I'd like to explain exactly what this oddly named rudiment is. The pata-fla-fla is a Swiss drum rudiment that, like many rudiments, sounds like its name. Specifically, the pata-fla-fla consists of a 16th-note rest, two 16th-note taps, and then two alternating flams.

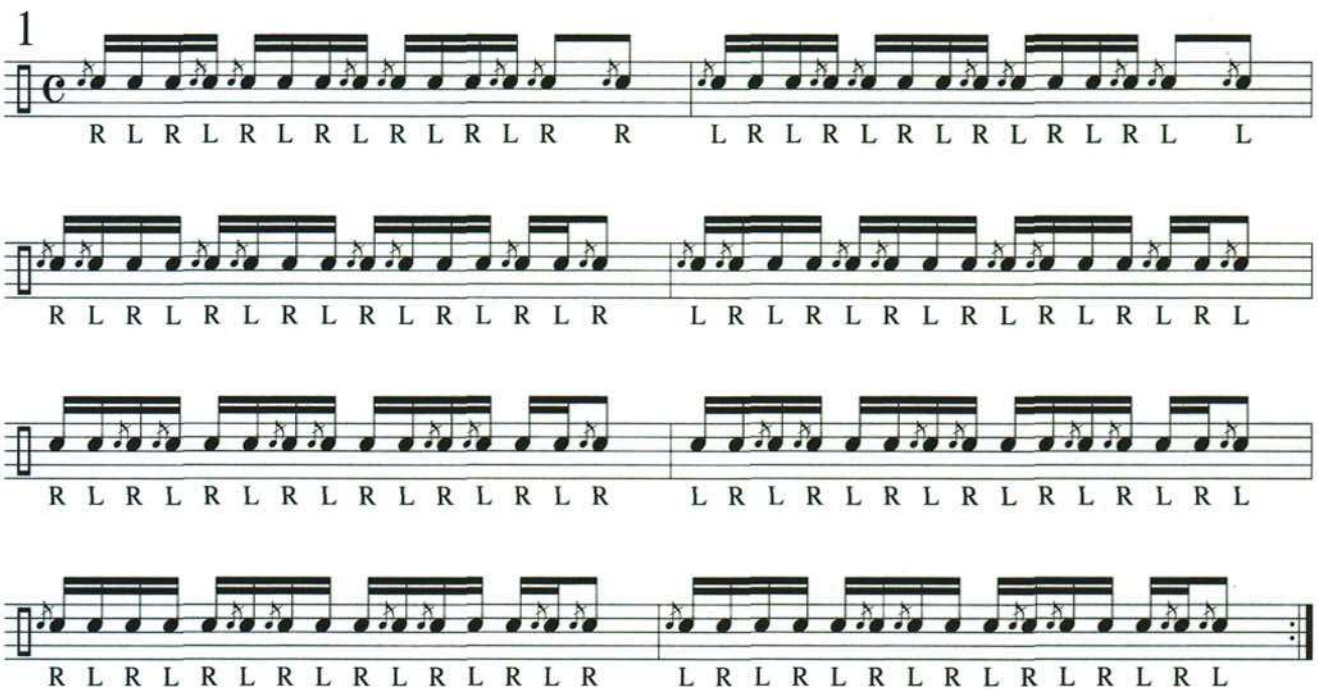
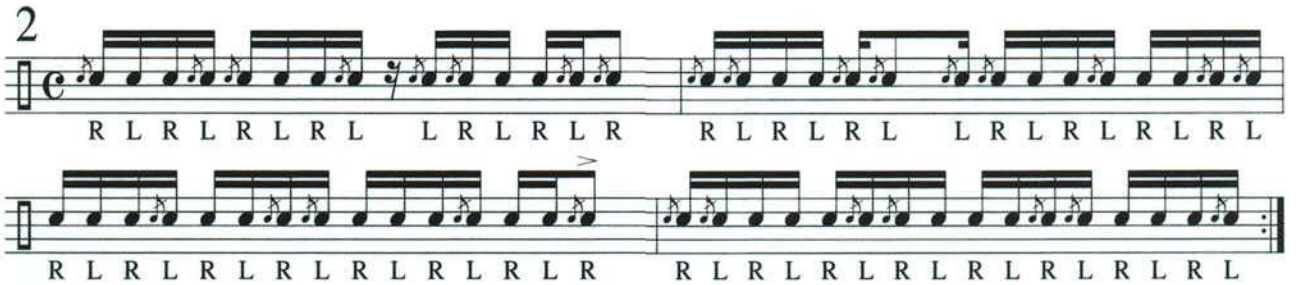
The creative power of the pata-fla-fla lies in linking more than one together and by inverting the rudiment (which simply means changing the order of the pairs of taps and flams). That said, in today's drum world it's quite common for drummers to think of the pata-fla-fla as a flam, two taps, and another flam, all performed with alternate sticking.

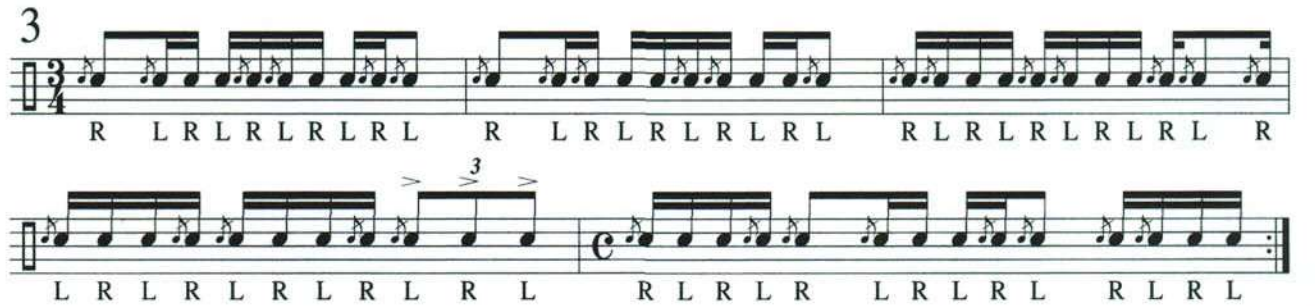
Built on the foundation of 16th notes, the flams in pata-fla-flas function as accents and as the "storytellers" of the performance. It's important to perform all the taps at a low (1" to 2") stick height, which will be key in contrasting the dynamics of the flams and the taps. I find it helpful to "fire" the flams in pata-fla-flas with a snapping motion.

Try to play as effortlessly as possible. Don't overplay. It may sound silly, but imagine yourself performing with the musical footprint of a cheetah rather than with that of an elephant.

Traditional Pata-Fla-Fla

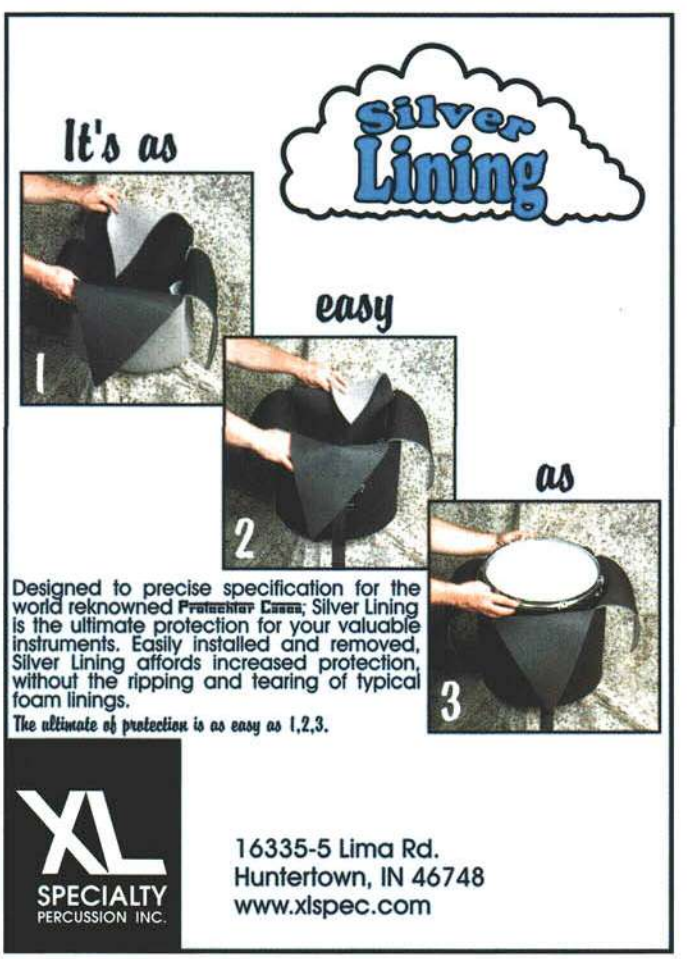
"Modern" Pata-Fla-Fla

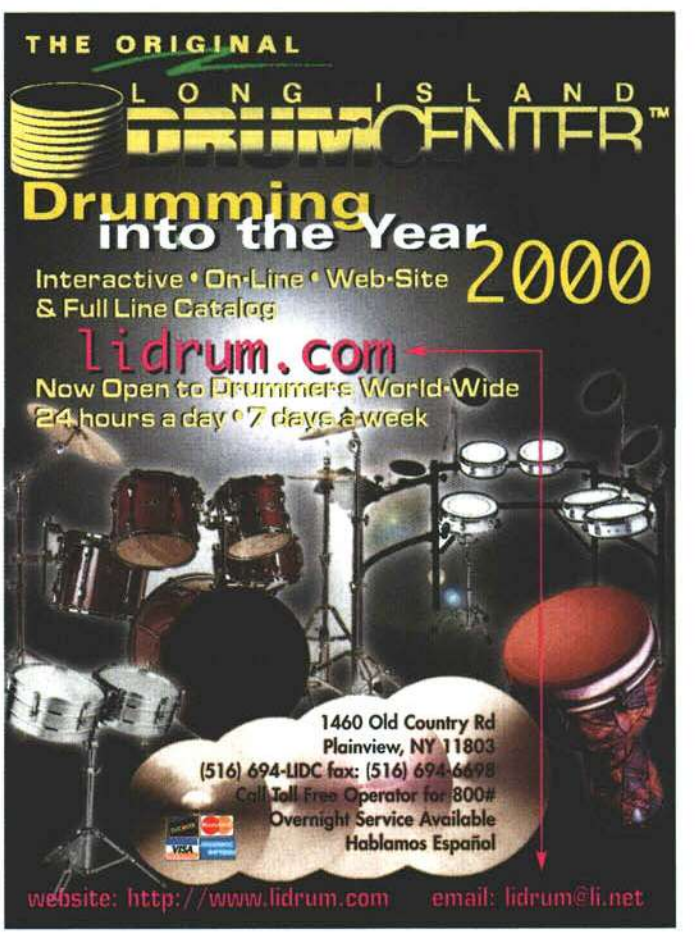
The following exercise lays out the pata-fla-fla and its three permutations. It may be helpful to omit the flams at first and replace them with accents. This should prove helpful in appreciating how the flams add texture to excite the exercise. It should also create a strong mental template for us to follow as we strive to master this exercise.

This next exercise is something that I call "Pata-Jam." It incorporates all of the above versions to demonstrate how the pata-fla-fla can be used effectively. Note how the first three bars utilize space for phrasing and how the fourth bar incorporates a 5-5-6 phrasing scheme.

Finally, this last example showcases the pata-fla-fla phrased in 3/4. (Please note that this five-bar example is equal to four bars of 4/4.) Keep your performance relaxed.



One More Challenge

For drumset or marching tenors: Try performing these ideas around your drums. One really effective idea is to perform the exercise on a main drum, which is the snare for the drumset and drum #2 on a set of tenors. However, perform the stroke of each flam on toms of your choice, keeping the grace notes and all the taps on the main drum.





Trade Schools For Drummers

by T. Bruce Wittet

Maybe you've just turned eighteen...or maybe you'll never see forty again. Wherever you sit, if you're serious about your craft, there comes a time to improve your skills. It might be as simple as finding a teacher—or as ambitious as moving off to college. However, before you sell the farm, remember that there is a middle ground: the "trade school." These institutions focus on drumming as a vocation, rather than as part of an overall academic program.

The following chart lists institutions offering environments conducive to "higher drumming." Since they differ widely in scope, rigor, and cost, we suggest you take advantage of the contact information provided to send for introductory literature, or to speak directly to a representative of the school. Somewhere out there—perhaps closer than you think—is a program geared to your schedule, budget, and drumming agenda.

School	Programs	Tuition	Academic Prerequisites
ATLANTA INST. OF MUSIC, Norcross, Georgia	1-year certificate; intermediate to advanced level, not for beginners	$8,800 year	high school diploma or GED
DRUMMERS COLLECTIVE, New York City, New York	flexible, from 1-day sessions to organized programs; 5-day intensives; 10-week certificate; 1-year comprehensive; all styles in depth	$50 private lessons (with discount blocks); $575 for 5-day intensive; $4,100 for ten-week certificate; $12,500 for 1-year comprehensive	none
LOS ANGELES MUSIC ACADEMY (LAMA), Los Angeles, California	1-year diploma; 1-week summer camp; emphasis on performance	approx. $10,000 per year; summer camp is $300	none
MUSIC TECH, Minneapolis, Minnesota	1-year diploma; 2-year degree; both full-time	$4,600 to $5,200 per semester	none; degree students must take 20 academic credits
NASHVILLE PERCUSSION INSTITUTE (NPI), Nashville, Tennessee	private lessons; workshop series; children's pre-school course	$30 for private lessons; workshops $150 and up	none
PERCUSSION INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (PIT), Los Angeles, California	certificate and degree courses; 6-month to multi-year	starts at $3,000 per 3-month quarter	high school diploma or equivalent
PLAYERS' SCHOOL OF MUSIC Clearwater, Florida	from 4- to 40-week programs; ear training and harmony included; 1-week intensive program	$1,000 to $8,500; 1-week intensive is $579	none; enrollees must be at least 18
DRUMTECH, London, England	private lessons; 3-month to full-time programs; 1-year diploma; 3-year degree; drums only, all styles	3-month program is £1,295; degree program is £5,500 per year	none for part-time or diploma; for degree, equivalent to (British) Grade 5 theory, Grade 8 performance

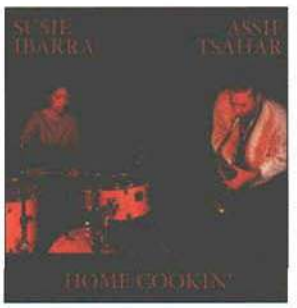
Audition Info	Financial Aid	Housing	Highlights	Contact
written exam, audio or video tape	available	available nearby; approx. $850 per month	comprehensive and serious program; "name" clinicians; A&R contacts; job placement potential; free preview video	Nite Driscoll (800) 886-6874
audio or video tape demonstrating current playing level and general musicality	none	work closely with Seafarers' House (Jesuit) and Educational Housing Service; $550 per month and up	interaction with students at Bass Collective; mature program celebrating 20th anniversary; walking distance to Blue Note and major Greenwich Village spots	Michael Krashes (212) 741-0091 ext. 104
audio or video tape; teacher evaluation	none at present; school is seeking accreditation	guidance available for off-campus apts. starting $500 per month	program led by Joe Porcaro and Ralph Humphrey; varied curriculum; lab facilities; field trips; studio technique with JR Robinson	Guada Reyes (626) 568-8850; guida@lamusicacademy.com; www.lamusicacademy.com
audition assessment	available	20 reserved housing spaces nearby; guidance to commercial apts. provided	drumset emphasis; exclusive texts; full MIDI labs; nurturing environment	Gordy Knudtsen (800) 594-9500
none	available	nearby, at commercial rates	proximity to recording industry; major session-player participation; flexible programs	Boo McAfee (615) 340-0085
audition or tape	available	nearby; 24-hour emergency housing assistance	networking opportunities; industry environment; "name" clinicians; ensemble work; labs; well-defined student policies	(213) 462-1384 www.mi.edu
none	none	affordable housing nearby; contacts supplied	ensemble playing; instructors include David Via and founder (bassist) Jeff Berlin; personal attention	Steve Whaley (800) 724-4242; (727) 669-5725; learnmusic @playerschool.com; www.playerschool.com
for degree program; can be done by tape for overseas students	100% subsidy from British Gov't for British citizens in degree program only	West London area; average £240 for room; comprehensive moving guide supplied	alumni from Radiohead, Seahorse; Numerous clinics; semester concerts; student gigs	Nick Bennett 011-44-181-749-3131

RECORDINGS

rating scale

Susie Ibarra/Assif Tsahar Home Cookin'

Susie Ibarra (dr, perc), Assif Tsahar (vln. talking dr. bs clr. fl, recorder, sx|



Susie Ibarra/Denis Charles Drum Talk

Susie Ibarra, Denis Charles (dr, perc)

As drummer with the David S. Ware Quartet, Susie Ibarra certainly shines. She is truly an original soloist and an inventive, even explosive free-jazz propellant. Ibarra is capable of firing flaming polyrhythms at will while creating majestic, complex percussion tales of great beauty and rumbling power. But for all her renown with Ware's group, it is with her husband, Assif Tsahar, that Ibarra creates a master statement. *Home Cookin'* is a moody, rollicking journey into music that has no boundaries. Alternating on a variety of instruments, the pair scald and smoke, dance and meditate, always making much music in the process. This is no free-jazz cacophony of animal squalls and distorted howls. Rather, it's an intimate performance of depth, dynamics, and immaculate pacing. Perhaps it's their close bond that makes this trip to the outer limits of drumming, hand percussion, and horns so cohesive and satisfying. (Hopscotch, PO Box 170279, Times Plaza Station, Brooklyn, NY 11217)

Recorded at Manhattan's Context Studios in January, 1998, *Drum Talk* brings Ibarra together with the late Denis Charles. Though not well known outside free-jazz circles, Charles was a contemporary of Ed Blackwell, Steve McCall, and Sunny Murray. On *Drum Talk* the duo pull explosions from press rolls and earthquakes from tom flurries in an aggressive, daring blaze of percussion crosstalk. This is drumming as lifeblood, as communicative as African tribal drumming yet as uniquely creative as Elvin Jones and John Bonham. Ibarra's "For Arcah" is all Charles, a whirlwind drum solo that is all story and content, an amazing piece of drum literature. (Wobbly Rail. PO Box 16206. Chappel Hill. NC 27516, www.wobbly.home.mindspring.com)

Drawing from bebop, free jazz, Caribbean, and Far Eastern music, these two albums show Susie Ibarra to be a multi-talented musician creating her own very personal and thrilling world music.

— Ken Micallef

Charlie Hunter/Leon Parker Duo

Leon Parker (dr, perc), Charlie Hunter (gtr|

Hunter and Parker, two of the most creative modern jazz artists on the scene today, emerge from their first collaboration sounding like they've been playing together for years. In addition, they make the duo format seem impossibly full—a more staggering accomplishment considering that the LP contains not a single throwaway note. Let's bear in mind, of course, that these guys are unusually adept at making the most of the limited equipment in front of them—Hunter, with the staggering 8-string guitar technique that allows him to play fluid bass lines and roving leads simultaneously, and Parker, who draws deep, classy rhythms from a simple kit that features few toms and no hi-hat.

Duo's lush instrumental tracks range from breezy bop to Latin vamps, from Gospel-hinted funk to a delicate cover of the Beach Boys' "Don't Talk." Each piece was recorded live in the studio, with Afro-Cuban percussion overdubs added only to the slow-burning opening cut. Parker, displaying a Midas touch that could make even half-notes swing, takes the most direct path to the heart of a given rhythm, choosing only that which is essential. Whether slapping a conga or pulling a brush across his snare drum, he finds gorgeous tones and plays with maturity and confidence that border on the enlightened. But hey, Leon knows how to party, too—just listen to him bust into a rowdy shuffle on "Recess," making Hunter howl with glee. (Blue Note)

— Michael Parillo

SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

The Flaming Lips have perfected their Beach Boys/Pink Floyd/Led Zeppelin hybrid on *The Soft Bulletin.* **Steven Drozd** just gets better and better with each new release, and *Bulletin* provides many examples of why he is

perhaps the most fun, funky, and creative drummer on the "indie" scene. (Warner Bros.)

Hugely influential German avant-rockers Can may no longer exist per se (the members still play on each other's albums), but fans of the band and drummer **Jaki Liebezeit** will quiver with delight at the new *Can Box.* The set includes a documentary/performance video, a wonderful book, and two CDs culled from several concerts from the '70s. Liebezeit is more interested in discovering a unique groove and sitting on it like a king on his throne, but when called for he can squeeze out the pyrotechnics. (Mute)

Throwin' a party? Buy this set. *Skin On Skin* is the name of the new two-disc anthology of legendary conguero **Mongo Santamaria.** Besides *amazing* percussion playing, you'll be treated to some of the most ridiculously groovy Latin big band, soul, and funk ever recorded. A true master. (Rhino)

Spare arrangements and quiet intensity characterize the genre-blurring work of singer **Cassandra Wilson.** On her new *Traveling Miles, a* tribute of sorts to Miles Davis, drummer/percussionists **Jeffrey Haynes, Marcus Baylor, Minu Cinelu, and Perry Wilson** give a lesson in making the biggest statement by staying out of the way. (Blue Note)

Ginger Baker & The DJQ20

Coward Of The County

Ginger Baker (dr), James Carter (sx). Ron Miles (trp), Fred Hess (tn sx), Todd Ayers (gtr), Glenn Taylor (steel gtr), Shamie Royston (org), Eric Gunnison (pno), Artie Moore (bs)

Ever since Cream's "Pressed Rat And Wart - hog," Ginger Baker has proven himself to be a singular (if eccentric) talent, both as drummer and composer. Always a Neanderthal mix of Max Roach and Gene Krupa, Baker played trash-jazz drums with Cream and Blind Faith, then went Afro-centric with his solo albums. The '90s found him recording two albums with Charlie Haden and Bill Frisell, but even those won't prepare you for the dialogs and surreal textures of this, Baker's last album before relocating to South Africa. With his new home in mind, Ginger's latest is a weird world of web-like drumming, yearning melodies, and deft arrangements. Throughout, Baker plays intricate drum patterns that predicate his band's every move. For the most part, it's a winning combo.

With its 6/4 pulse accented on toms and hi-hat, "Cyril Davis" recalls an intellectualized Art Blakey track. Ditto for the nimble "Ginger Spice," a 3/4 jazz waltz with twirling guitar and keyboards. Baker's stomping toms and farting bass drums ride roughshod over "Dangle The Carrot," a classic Krupa bashfest over a twisted Dixieland arrangement. And there are odd meters aplenty, including the 9/8 of "Megan Showers" and the Ellingtonian 17/4 grandeur of "Jesus Loves Me." Baker only missteps when ambition overtakes him. "Coward Of The County" and "Daylight" are studies in melodic nausea, as tuneless instruments collide over anemic, unsettling melodies. Still, the bulk of this album is strong, and it's not to be missed. (Atlantic)

— Ken Micallef

Various Artists

Encores, Legends & Paradox: A Tribute To The Music Of ELP

Pat Mastelotto, Doane Perry, Simon Phillips, Mike Portnoy (dr), Trent Gardner (kybd, vcl), Jordan Rudess. Igor Khoroshev, Erik Norlander, Mark Robertson, Derek Sherinian, John Novello, Geoff Downes (kybd), Wayne Gardner (bs, gtr), Robert Berry (bs, gtr, vcl), Mark Wood, Jerry Goodman (vln). Peter Banks, Marc Bonilla, Martin Barre (gtr). James LaBrie, John Wetton, Glenn Hughes (vcl)

This tribute to the music and spirit of ELP is one of the more appropriately conceived projects in the recent spate of progressive music gatherings. Wisely, Magna Carta decided to bring together current and former members of such bands as Yes, Jethro Tull, King Crimson, Asia, and Dream Theater to tackle ELP's complex repertoire.

Within the impressive arrangements by Robert Berry (who worked with Emerson and Palmer in the band 3) and Magellan's Trent Gardner, Simon Phillips shines brightest, with his solid time, comfortable feel, and monstrous drum sounds on classic ELP tracks like "Karn Evil 9," "Knife Edge," "Hoedown," "The Barbarian," and the epic "Tarkus." Pat Mastelotto also delivers outstanding performances, combining acoustic and electronic drums and percussion on "Bitches Crystal" and "Toccata." Doane Perry adds a heavier rock edge to "A Time And A Place," weaving his way through odd time changes with a well-recorded, wet drum sound and strong double bass technique. And Mr. Progressive, Mike Portnoy, puts his signature prog-metal style to good use on "The Sheriff and "The Endless Enigma."

This successful meeting of prog artists old and new is a testament to the impact that ELP has made on a generation of musicians, and it's a dignified platform upon which to carry the genre into the next millennium. (Magna Carta)

— Mike Haid

Ester Default State

Ian Brumbaugh (dr), Paul Garvey (vcl, gtr). Cosmo Jones (gtr, vcl). Bob Tiezze, Mike Renniger (bs)

Ester presents an interesting musical dichotomy. The band's PR describes its name as meaning "any of a large group of organic compounds formed when an acid or an alcohol interact...." Mmm. Well, opening as a jazzy rock album and then segueing into a rock-tinged jazz collection, *Default State* is a complex mix of compounds, fused together seamlessly by Ian Brumbaugh's drumming.

The album's best moments build on the energy generated by Brumbaugh. The drummer keeps the songs interesting with a jazz-centric mentality, using his drums ornamentally, though several tracks prove he also knows how to rock. Working around a pretty sweet-sounding kit, Brumbaugh makes great use of cool specialty cymbals, like when he accentuates the syncopated feel of "Heading Through." Staying on top of the songs, he syncs up with the vocals and plays variations off the guitar line. This method allows him to convert the vocal dirge of "One Way" into a dotted-16th-note dance, rescuing it from rhythmic banality.

The latter half of *Default State* gives way to an airy Windham Hill style that soothes rather than enthuses. Whatever the concoction, though, Brumbaugh always blends the elements into a cohesive groove. (Thirsty Ear)

— Fran Azzarto and Lisa Marie Crouch

JAZZING AROUND

A six-pack of cool new acoustic jazz efforts

Drummer Rob Egan is well up to the task of kicking the challenging ensemble jazz of Ron Bosse & Pursuance on *Emotion And Intellect.* Not recommended for lightweights. • **Horacio Hernandez** is teamed with bassist John Patitucci on pianist Joanne Brackeen's *Pink Elephant Magic.* "El Negro" seems to struggle a bit with her tempos (or lack thereof) and the more confining concepts, but hearing him burn on the challenging "Cram 'N Exam" and create space on "Filene's" makes up even for the poor drum mix. • **Eric Harland** provides a lot of dynamics and good interplay within the band structure on pianist Aaron Goldberg's *Turning Point,* which also features **Karsh Kale** playing tablas on an interesting acoustic jungle track. • Drummer **Wally Schnalle** leads a fine jazz quartet featuring pianist Jeff Pittson, infusing a healthy funk attitude into much of the playful modern jazz on *That Place.* Schnalle composed it all, including a tribute to Tony Williams in the "Sister Cheryl" vein. • **Jeff Siegel** proves himself a mature and creative drummer on Stevens, Siegel & Ferguson's *Panorama,* featuring trumpeter Valery Ponomarev on a collection of originals and classy covers. The drums have a crisp, natural sound, thanks to the clarity of Siegel's strokes. • **Tom Teasley** takes tunes from the standard jazz repertoire and injects them with rhythms from different cultures and ages on *Global Standard Time.* It's New Orleans Jack Swing via Sao Paulo, and there are several inspired moments. (Ron Bosse 8 Pursuance: Thinking Man Records, [718] S45-2439; Joanne Brackeen: Arkadia Jazz, [212] 533-0007; Aaron Goldberg: J Curve Records, [513] 624-9599; Wally Schnalle: Retlaw Records. PO Box 112323, Campbell, CA 95011, WSchnalle@aol.com; Stevens, Siegel & Ferguson: Imaginary Records. PO Box 66, Whites Creek, TN 37189; Tom Teasley: T8T Music, [703] 765-2118/2116, www.tomteasley.com)

— Robin Tolleson

Tribal Tech Thick

Kirk Covington (dr), Gary Willis (bs), Scott Kinsey (kybd), Scott Hendetson (gtr)

Their first attempt at an entirely improvisational work, *Thick* is the most important release in the twelve-year history of the uncompromising jazz/rock ensemble led by guitarist Scott Henderson and bassist Gary

Willis, Tribal Tech. The result is musical and textural excitement that reflects the spirit of Miles Davis's *Bitches Brew* era, although not as lengthy in its experimentations. The subconscious communication between the players is haunting, and the variety of feels and grooves makes this set easily digestible.

Though his grooves fall in line with the Weather Report style of circling the beat without holding a constant 2 and 4, drummer Kirk Covington has a unique and unpredictable style all his own, and avoids the stereotypical fusion vocabulary. This is especially evident on "Sheik Of Encino," where the feel falls between free bop and funky Latin. "Party At Kinsey's" opens with a New Orleans feel, then moves into a serious hip-hop groove, with Covington revealing the inborn relationship of these styles. "Jalapeno" unveils a modern bebop style of improvisation that once again encompasses the current rock/hip-hop grooves, and Covington creates an interesting texture with a tambourine snare head with snares off. The title track and "What Has He Had?" show Kirk's willingness to lay down a solid funky rock feel with his trademark explosions of single-stroke fills. The uptempo "Slick" has Weather Report written all over it, a feel Covington is able to perfect after having toured with The Zawinul Syndicate.

This release solidifies Covington's place as one of the few truly innovative jazz/rock drummers of the recent past. (Zebra)

— Mike Haid

The Other Ones The Strange Remain

Mickey Hart, John Molo (dr), Bob Weir, Mark Karan (gtr, vcl). Phil Lesh (bs, vcl), Brace Hornsby (kybd, vcl), Dave Ellis (sx, vcl), Steve Kimock (gtr)

For the thousands of Deadheads left in the lurch after Jerry Garcia's passing caused the Grateful Dead to disband, it was a miracle when three longtime members hit the road last summer with The Other Ones, a tight, well-rehearsed group playing classic Dead (with "resurrected" songs, new twists, and solo tunes added). The tour was a success, offering jubilant fans the closest thing imaginable to a Dead show. But the release of a live double disc begs the question: With the marketplace already flooded with fan recordings and officially sanctioned LPs, is there really any reason to purchase this Jerry-less document of what amounts to a nostalgia tour? Gladly, the answer is yes. The music is vibrant, the improvisations probing—just like in the good ol' days.

Though two new guitarists skillfully conjure the spirit of the late master without cheaply rehashing his licks, the element of the Dead most sorely missed here is Garcia's endearingly creaky singing voice. (Can anyone else *really* sing "Sugaree"?) Distinctly *non*-creaky is The Other Ones' sharp drumming tandem, in which John Molo (of Hornsby's group The Range) plays straight man to Mickey Hart's colorist. Though dual drumkit playing is difficult, requiring huge ears and considerable restraint, Molo fits right in, swinging a bit less than original Dead drummer Bill Kreutzmann but pounding out a stronger backbeat beneath Hart's thundering tom fills, Afro-Cuban-tinged bell patterns, and big, "wet" hi-hats. The pair's tribal kicks in the reworked "St. Stephen" help to remind us that even though the mighty Jerry is gone, his music never stops. (Arista/Grateful Dead Records)

— Michael Parillo

VIDEOS

Gary Husband Interplay And Improvisation On The Drums

level: intermediate to advanced, 64 minutes, $39.95

Though focusing more on performance than instruction, this well-constructed overview of Gary Husband's approach to several different styles of drumming carries great educational value. Seen here on both large and small setups, Husband is clearly

GOING UNDERGROUND

Sea And Cake singer/guitarist Sam Prekop's self-titled album features the hefty talents of drummer **Chad Taylor,** who also spends some serious hours with The Chicago Underground Duo and Orchestra. At a recent show at New York's Mercury Lounge, Taylor galvanized the crowd with his sticks, mallets, and hands, beating out fascinating rhythms behind Prekop's polite weirdness. The album is a little less adventurous, but you'll still want to hear this guy. (Thrill Jockey)

The trio Blonk/Lonberg-Holm/Zerang is anything *but* polite on *First Meetings.* Sporting a vocal/cello/percussion & tubaphone lineup, the group seems intent on squeezing every imaginable snort, scream, rattle, and hiss out of their instruments on these eleven deranged "compositions." **Michael Zerang** doesn't play a lot of notes, but the ones he *does* play are sure to leave you clenching muscles you probably didn't know you had. Odd. (Buzz/Allegro)

On one of their new albums, the Japanese band Ghost is described as "heavy chamber folk." Not a bad summation, actually, though you might want to add "psychedelic" to that list. On Snuff pox *Immanence* and *Tune In, Turn On, Free Tibet,* Masaki Batoh and crew create a spacey yet beautifully arranged world of their own, where **Setsuko Furuya's** minimalist drums, orchestral bells, marimba, vibes, and timpani help set the Controls for the heart of the sun and never look back. (Drag City)

— Adam Budofsky

FROM THE EDITORS' VAULT

Rediscovering drumming's dusty gems

Dave Brubeck Quartet At Carnegie Hall

Joe Morello (dr), Dave Brubeck (pno). Gene Wright (bs), Paul Desmond (sx)

On a cold February night in 1963, The Dave Brubeck Quartet reached musical heights few thought they could ever reach. And for fans of the legendary Joe Morello, this recording captures the master at his absolute *best.*

For starters, give a listen to "St. Louis Blues" and "Pennies From Heaven" for a taste of Joe's flawless execution, crisp ride cymbal articulation, and playful solo work. The Brubeck Quartet was well known for their odd-time experimentation, and Joe keeps it all under control here, through the tricky four-over-three of "It's A Raggy Waltz," the fiery 9/8 on the classic "Blue Rondo A La Turk," and the head-jogging two bars of three/two bars of four alternation on "Three To Get Ready."

For a valuable lesson in solo construction, check out "Castilian Drums," complete with polymetric statements, blazing singles over a 5/4 ostinato, intelligent use of tension and release, and a nonstop left hand. *At Carnegie Hall* is one of the finest recorded examples of what a true jazz virtuoso can do with a four-piece kit. Unfortunately this album has not been released stateside on CD yet, but a Japanese import on Sony can be obtained for a stiff price. Scour your used racks, or break out the plastic—hint: we found a cutout LP listed on exchange.com for $18—but somehow, track one down.

— Ron Spagnardi

influenced by Billy Cobham and Simon Phillips, partly evident in his use of both left- and right-hand lead. Husband is surrounded by several of the heavy "sidemen" he's worked with in the past: Allan Holdsworth participates in an excellent freeform duet with the drummer, Level 42 bassist Mark King nudges Husband along some killer funk grooves, and Gary Moore and Jack Bruce provide an authentic rock backdrop for Gary to display his solid, Ginger Baker-influenced British-rock roots.

Despite an aggravating lack of foot close-ups, the camera work is generally good, and wisely keeps things moving by focusing on the other musicians as well. Throughout, Gary shows a deep passion for the music and expresses himself in a very musical fashion, regardless of the style. His influences might be obvious, but so is his talent and love for drumming, and *that's* what makes this video so enjoyable to watch. (Rittor Music)

— Mike Haid

Kalani Show Me The Rhythms and All About... series

level: beginner to intermediate, 45 minutes, $19.95 (each)

Kalani is a busy fellow. Toca Hand Percussion's "principal clinician" is a highly visible performer, columnist, and recording artist, and he can now claim to have produced two of the most ambitious video series in recent memory. Kalani's lessons cover a wide spectrum of instruments and styles, affording viewers their choice of two videos on conga, two on bongos, two on jembe, and even one on West African dunun drumming. The *All About* tapes offer beginners an out-of-the-box guide to the history, technique, and mechanics of each instrument; the *Show Me* tapes demonstrate a variety of traditional and popular rhythms for each drum.

Each video is brief, affordable, and quite well-presented. Students can easily comprehend the topics thanks to Kalani's "slow at first, then up to speed" playing (seen from over-the-shoulder camera angles), just as they can clearly decipher complex ensemble rhythms with the split-screen presentation of four simultaneous parts. Bargain pricing of course means fewer bells and whistles: The videos come without booklets—but the on-screen notation for each rhythm certainly goes far to make that complaint moot. Those who seek the wisdom of legendary drummers would be better served by videos featuring Changuito & Giovanni Hidalgo. But players looking for a quick and accurate overview of a half-dozen traditional styles need look no further than these tapes. (Kalani Music, [800] 248-4827, www.kalanimusic.com)

— Bill Kiely

Madness Across The Water

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BOOKS

Beginning and Intermediate Snare Drum Solos

by Dave Black & Sandy Feldstein

2 books, $5.95 each

These books feature one-page solos (twenty-two in *Beginning,* twenty-three in *Intermediate)* that were originally contained in *Alfred's Drum Method, Books 1 And 2.* The first four solos in the beginner book offer brief explanations on dynamics, accents, repeats, codas, etc., which are clearly marked throughout. Most of the pieces are in 2/4 or 4/4 time, with a couple in 3/4 and one in 6/8. Unfortunately, there are no further written instructions in the rest of the book, except on Solo 19, which says to "use flam tap stickings where possible" but doesn't specify what that sticking is! Knowing the proper stickings is essential to playing the rudiment(s) correctly, and explaining them would certainly enhance the value of these solos.

The first twenty solos of the intermediate book pick up where the beginner book leaves off. The technique/rudiments become more advanced, as do the time signatures, and there are a few more stickings marked. Solo 14 features a tom-tom/snare drum part and includes a suggested setup. All but Solos 13-16 have a written bass drum part, which would make these interesting to play on a drumset using your right (or left) foot on the bass line and both hands on the snare part. (Or they could be played as simple duets.) The last two solos, written by Jay Wanamaker, are titled "Rudimental" and "Orchestral." The first features all the stickings required to play it in a true rudimental style. The latter seems a bit out of place (and not very "orchestral") but does use various areas of the playing surface to produce different tones.

These books provide good reading material but should be used with an instructor, who could provide the missing details. (Alfred)

— Andrea Byrd

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Analyzing Style

by Rick Van Horn

Question: What do Kenny Aronoff, Chad Smith, Carter Beauford, Vinnie Colaiuta, Jim Sonefeld, Eddie Bayers, Dennis Chambers, and Charlie Watts all have in common?

Answer: You.. .if you're playing in a Top-40 club band.

If you take your job seriously, you can face a tremendous amount of frustration trying to meet the musical standards set by those gentlemen, and the dozens of others whose work you are expected to present to your audience. After all, you might be an exceptional player in your own right, but you're faced with an impossible situation. Carter couldn't be expected to sit in with The Stones and lay it down like Charlie, Jim might feel uncomfortable playing Vinnie's intricate syncopations, and I doubt that Eddie and Chad would enjoy changing places. But night after night, your group might be performing music by each of these great players. How do you handle it?

Let's examine the problem. You are paid to do a job, which is to play competently and entertainingly in a variety of popular styles. Besides the Top-40 music featuring the drummers I've mentioned, you might pull a couple of country tunes out of the bag, and maybe some hip-hop or classic R&B. Throw your own personal musical tastes and influences into this melting pot, along with the original licks you cherish, and it's hard to figure out what to play, what not to play, and how to go about deciding who you are as a musician.

"The trick is to play with understanding as well as with technique"

As I've talked with players in other club bands about this situation, I've come across two recurring approaches to solving the problem:

1. The total duplication approach. This calls for a virtually transcribed version of each part of each individual song. I don't like this approach, for two reasons: First, you can't honestly hope to achieve total duplication, since you're not the original artist, nor are you performing under the same conditions as the recording. Even the recording artists themselves don't duplicate their original parts note for note when performing live.

Second, when you try to re-create someone else's work, you're not doing any creating yourself, and music is a creative art (even in a Top-40 format). If all you do is try to play other people's parts, then you're using other people's imaginations, and denying your own. You are using skills you've probably worked hard to develop, but using them only to copy, not to originate. Picasso didn't spend his life making "paint-by-numbers" pictures. Why should you perform "play-by-numbers" musical parts?

2. The "To-hell-with-the-original, we're-going-to-do-it-our-

to realize that Top-40 bands are hired to play songs that are familiar to the audience due to repeated radio airplay. If you're going to play Top-40 (and this goes for popular country, R&B, or any other style), it's self-defeating to make the songs too different from the original versions. All you'll do is alienate your audience. You owe it to them to keep the tunes recognizable so they'll be comfortable with them, and thus with you. If you can't live without being totally "off the wall" with each tune, then restrict yourself to original material, or go into a show format where fresh arrangements are what make the show appealing.

I think there's a way to reconcile these two different approaches through what I call the "character analysis" of any given tune, or of any particular drummer. Rather than transcribing the song note for note, concentrate on the unique character of the playing—how the music is structured, and where the emphasis is placed. If you're studying with a teacher, work together on this. Listen to a song you wish to perform, and compare your impressions of the song's key elements. A trained, objective ear can often hear qualities or nuances you might overlook. In some cases, it's easy to get a basic concept for a style of music, which can then be applied to several songs, even if they are by different artists. Classic disco music is a perfect example. A very heavy, four-beat bass drum pattern, a solid backbeat on 2 and 4, and either a 16th-note hi-hat pattern or an open/close pattern on the "&" of each beat, and you pretty much sum up the character of the standard dance beat. From there on, any variations or fills are up to the individual player. With contemporary rock, you might want to note how the hi-hat is often played half-open and ringy, usually with just straight quarter or 8th notes against a heavy backbeat. This heavy ride might carry over to the bell of a cymbal or a cowbell. Power fills tend to be triplets or 16th-note patterns across a wide range of toms.

These are, of course, oversimplifications. But if you approach a song or a style in this way, it gives you the means to establish a recognizable structure to keep the audience happy, while giving you that structure as a foundation upon which to build.

You can apply that same sort of analysis to the playing of individual drummers. What differentiated Steve Smith from other rock drummers when he played with Journey included the way he used his toms and ride cymbals to keep a steady rhythm while still creating varied melodic patterns. (Listen to "Don't Stop Believing" for an excellent example.) Carter Beauford's use of syncopation between bass drum and snare is a fundamental feature of his style. You don't have to duplicate his patterns, but you should be aware of *what those patterns are made up of,* so you can create your own in a tastefully similar (if not identical) manner. With Stewart Copeland's still-influential playing, a strong reggae feel is present in his basic grooves, but the liveliness of his fills reflects his jazz influences. His tuning and dynamic snare attack are also key elements that make his playing recognizable. You can incorporate such elements into your performance without sublimating your creativity. When it comes to Charlie Watts, the great key is his simplicity. If you can capture the way Charlie uses space to allow the rest of the music the room it needs, then you have the character of The Stones' playing.

The trick is to play with *understanding,* as well as with technique. And the most important things to remember are *when* and *how* to apply the analysis you've made. In music, as in any art form, it's true that contrast and shock value can work as a special effect. It *might be* possible to put a Buddy Rich fill into a Goo Goo Dolls tune for such an effect—but you wouldn't deem it appropriate to play like Buddy throughout the tune. If you're a fan of one particular style of music, or of one drummer's playing, you run the risk of over-incorporating that style into any and all music you perform. This is the most difficult piece of musical discipline to master, because you are working against your own enthusiasm, your own tastes, and your own personal enjoyment. But remember, you might otherwise be working against your source of income! You won't be a desirable commodity to your band if you can't sublimate your desire to shine personally in favor of your ability to support the entire band's performance. Be aware that if you're playing Carter Beauford funk beats in a Hootie & The Blowfish tune, the audience isn't going to care whether you've got them down perfectly. All they know is, it *doesn't* fit the tune, and it *doesn't* move them to dance.

Take comfort in the fact that you actually enjoy an advantage that most recording artists don't: You get to perform with variety. I've interviewed several major drummers who have expressed a certain boredom with the music they've been playing in concerts over the previous few years. They aren't really allowed to stretch out, because their audiences expect to hear their hits over and over. You, at least, are playing the hits of many different groups, so you *do* get to stretch out. Take advantage of that, and work to achieve a thorough understanding of each style of playing, as well as the highest possible degree of creativity within each one. In this way, you can keep your audiences thrilled, keep your band happy with your work, and keep yourself sane and satisfied.

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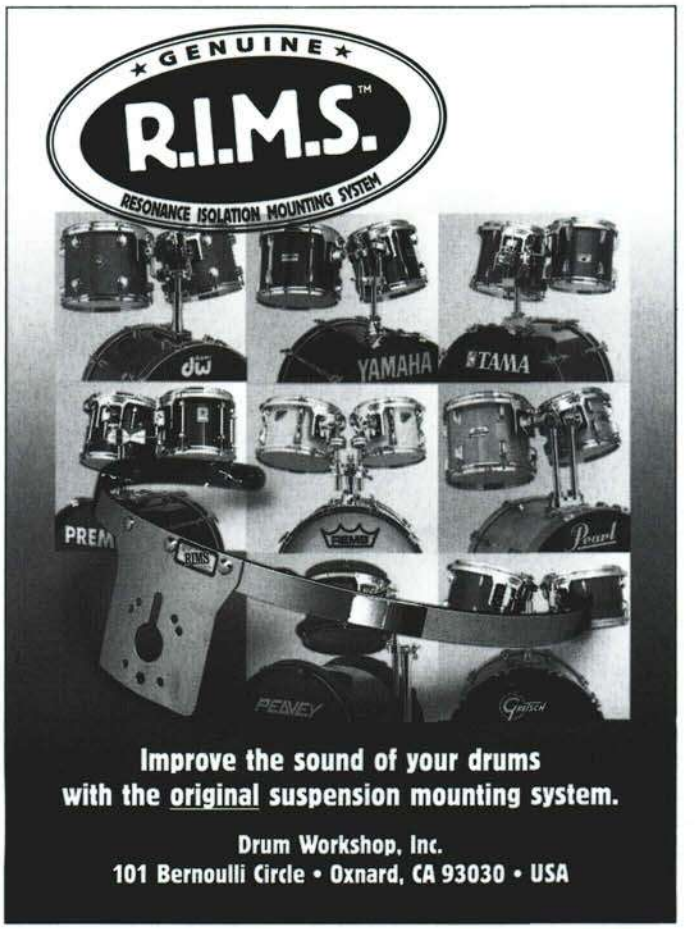

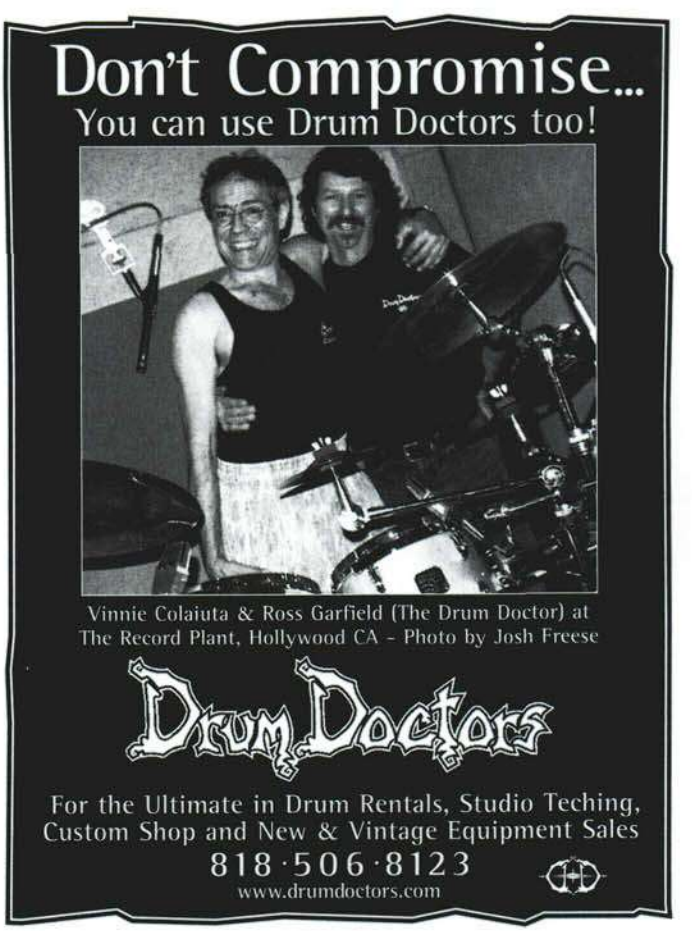

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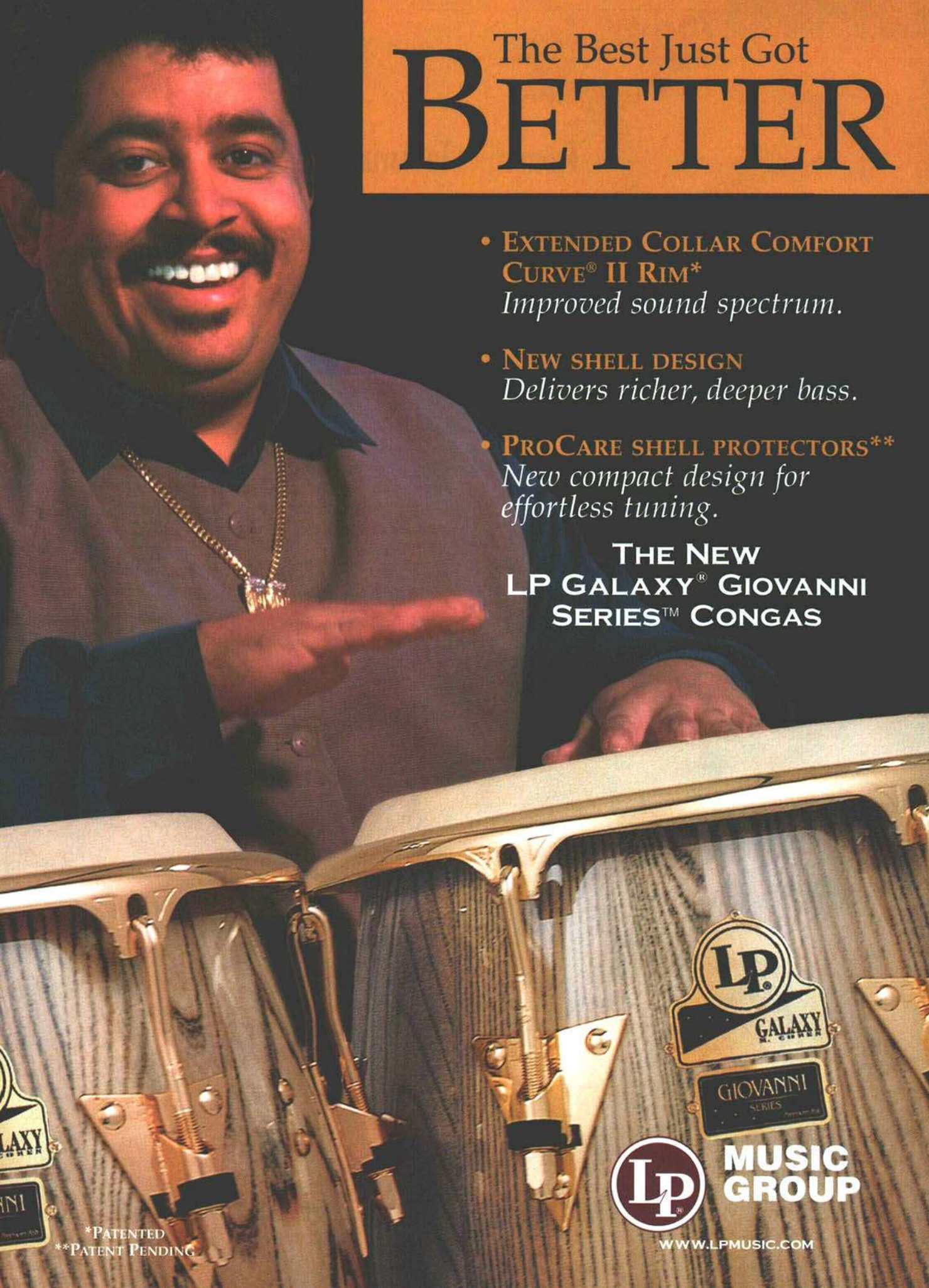
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From Miles To Mariah

Sammy Figueroa

by Rick Mattingly photos by Paul La Raia

For years he had practiced playing congas along with records on which Tony Williams was the drummer. And now he was about to do a gig with Williams' band, Lifetime. Sammy Figueroa was thrilled.

"What should I play, Tony?" Figueroa asked.

"Play whatever the hell you want," Williams replied. "Just don't get in my way."

With that, Williams counted off the first tune. He didn't say another word to Figueroa the rest of the night.

"After the gig, Tony was packing his drums up, and he still hadn't said anything to me," Figueroa recalls. "So I figured I must have really screwed up and he would never call me again. But as he was leaving, I said, 'Tony, it was great playing with you, regardless.' And he turned around and said, 'The reason I didn't say anything is because the shit was happening. Good night.' So I played with Lifetime for the last five months of the band. That was an incredible experience."

Williams is just one of many who have considered Sammy Figueroa to be "happening" over the years. His list of recording credits is staggering, consisting of hundreds of recordings with such artists as Charles Mingus, Quincy Jones, George Benson, John Scofield, David Sanborn, Mike Mainieri, Jan Hammer, Mike Stern, Spyro Gyra, The Yellowjackets, Celine Dion, Mariah Carey, Whitney Houston, Mick Jagger, Diana Ross, Aretha

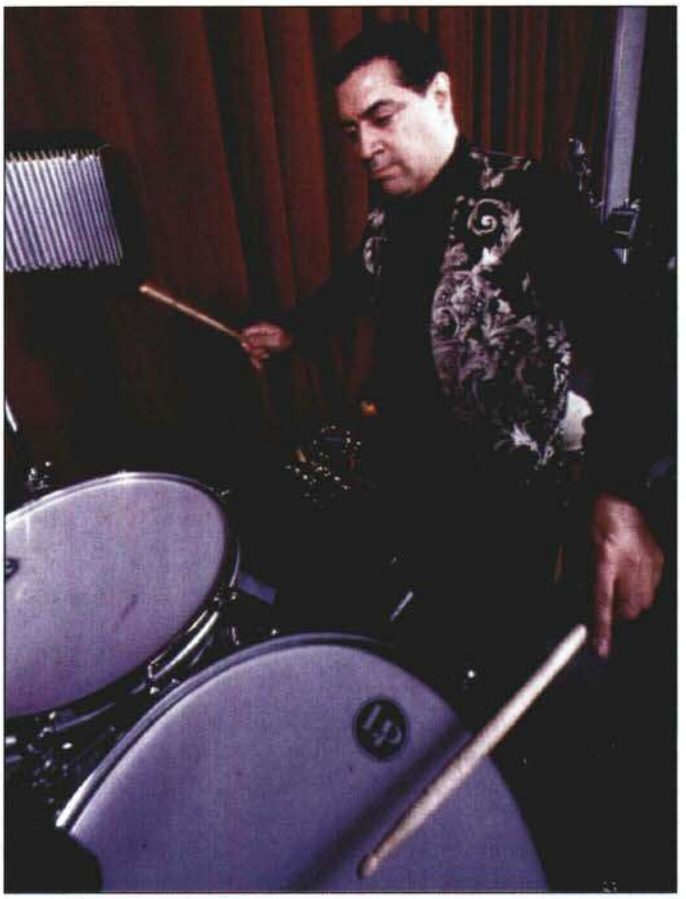
Franklin, Stevie Wonder, 10,000 Maniacs, Bette Midler, Steve Winwood, David Bowie, Rickie Lee Jones, and Stevie Ray Vaughan. He was also a member of the original *Saturday Night Live* band.

Figueroa is especially proud of a particular three-year association in the early 1980s—one that began with a bizarre phone call. "One night, at about one in the morning, I was watching TV with my wife, and the phone rang," Figueroa remembers. "I picked up the phone and someone with a real raspy voice said, 'Are you ready to play?' So I said, 'Who is this?' And he said, 'Who the f— do you *think* it is?' I thought it was a friend of mine playing a joke, so I said, 'Aw, come on,' and I hung up on him.

"So the phone rings again, and when I pick it up the same voice says, 'If you hang up on me again I'm gonna kick your ass.' So I said, 'Who is this?' And he said, 'This is Miles Davis you motherf—er.' I said, 'Miles, I'm sorry! I thought it was a joke.' So he asked me if I wanted to play with him, and I said, 'Yes, of course.' He said, 'Be at CBS tomorrow at eight. Bring your drums.' And bang, he hung up.

"I get to the studio and he's sitting there. I've never seen anyone with so much aura and intensity. I walk over to shake his hand and he just says, 'Play.' So I get behind my drums, but they're out of tune. So I say, 'I need a wrench to tune the drums.' And he says, 'F— the wrench. PLAY!' So I started playing, and we recorded *Man With The Horn* and two more albums after that."

Despite the inauspicious start, Figueroa says that he and Davis became close friends. "He told me that he had heard me on a Chaka Khan album he loved very much, *I'm Every Woman,* as well as on a live Chaka Khan album I'd done, and he wanted that type of percussion sound in his band. So we worked together for quite a while. He opened my ears and my heart to the role of rhythm in a band, and he taught me what minimalism really is. It isn't about playing a lot of notes; it's about playing the right thing at the right time. If you don't have any ideas, just sit down until you have an idea, and *then* play.



"At first I thought it was arrogant to just sit there and not play. Percussionists really want to show what they can do. But here was a guy who told me that the only thing that mattered was that you played something that made sense. It's easier to play a lot than to play a little. It's great to have all the technique, but it's more exciting when you play the right thing in the right place. When you do that, it has more meaning.

"So I learned a lot from Miles, and I feel very blessed that he was in my life. It was an honor to play with such a great genius. And he always liked percussionists. For him, the drummer was the one driving the truck, and the percussionist was supplying the scenery with different colors.

"It's all about timing and taste, and I strive to play tastefully and to make myself feel good. Music is the healing energy of the planet, but you don't need to do that much. Subtleness often has more beauty than exaggeration. Great players like Miles or Freddie Hubbard or Bill Evans could just hit one note and make you cry or make you happy or make you emotional. That's what one strives for in this art form of music, and I'm learning about it every single minute of my life."

Figueroa's life began in The Bronx in the early 1950s. His father had been a singer in Puerto Rico. "My father passed away when he was in his early thirties, so I never knew him well," Figueroa says. "I didn't hear his music until I was older and my mother gave me his records. But I guess it's in the blood. My uncles are also musicians."

"Miles taught me what minimalism really is. If you don't have any ideas, just sit down until you have one, and *then* play."

Because there was a lot of gang violence in The Bronx in the 1950s, Sammy was sent to Puerto Rico at an early age, where he lived with his grandparents. But he didn't spend much time listening to traditional Puerto Rican or Afro-Cuban music. "I grew up listening to jazz," he says. "When I was young, my friend's father, who was a musician, would play recordings by Miles, Clare Fischer, Cal Tjader, Lee Morgan, Eric Dolphy, and people like that. I remember kids in the early '60s listening to the Beatles, but I was listening to *Miles In The Sky.* At the time I thought it was normal, but as I grew older I realized that I was a little offbeat in comparison to the other kids."

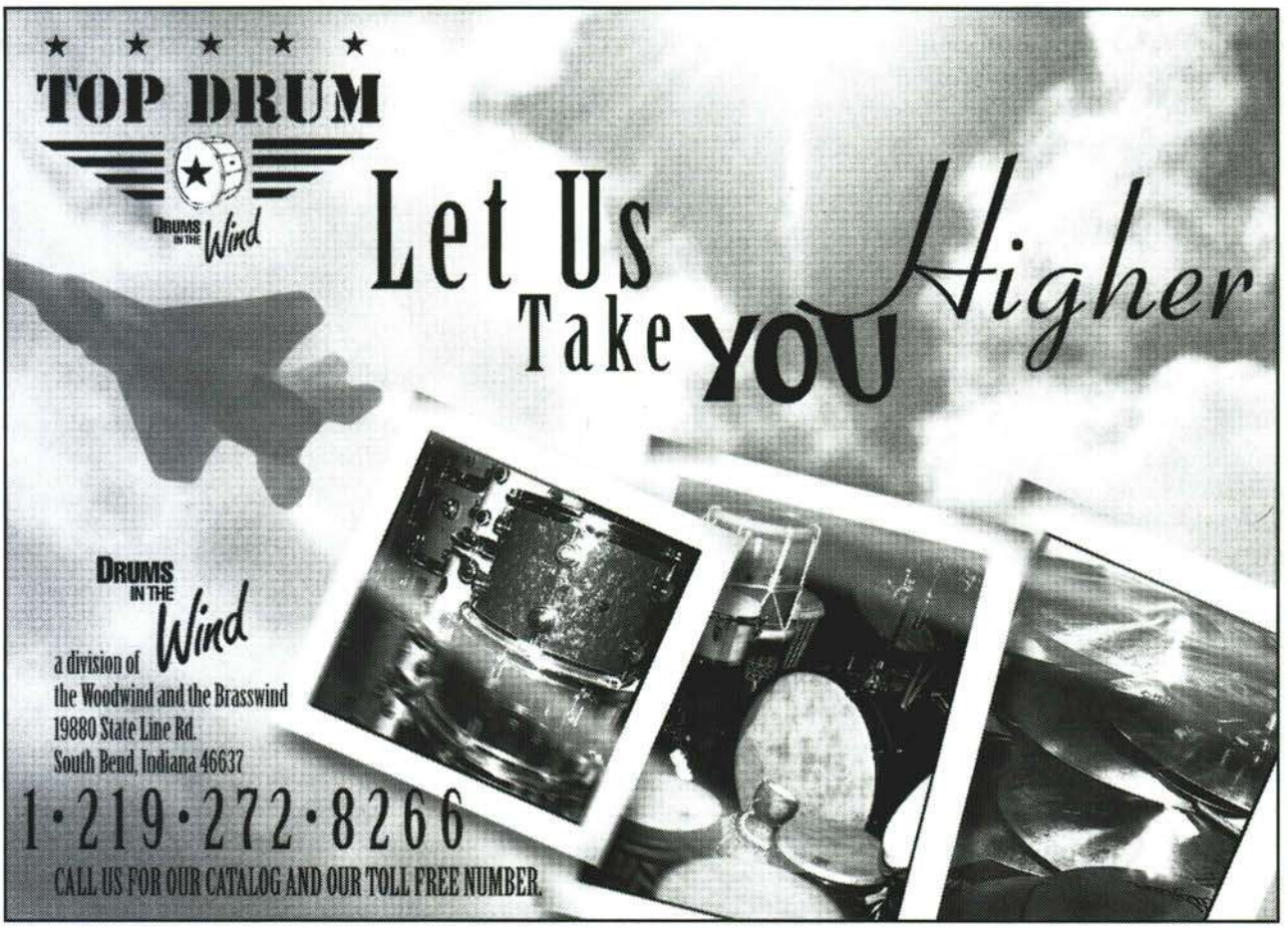
Figueroa first became involved in music as a singer, performing in nightclubs while still a teenager. "One night I heard some guy

playing a conga drum, and he blew me away to such a degree that I knew I wanted to be a musician," Figueroa says. "I started listening to Armando Peraza with Cal Tjader, and to Mongo Santamaria, who was a great influence. Mostly I picked it up from watching people in the clubs that I could get into—or sneak into—and from listening to a lot of recordings."

But he still wasn't involved with the traditional music of his heritage. "I was surrounded by so much Latin music that I wasn't interested in it," Figueroa says. "My influences were jazz and Brazilian music, and so I sort of created my own style based on that. It wasn't until years later that I started getting interested in my own roots, and then I started learning it properly to further my playing. It helped me open up my consciousness, and I'm still learning today. I discover new Brazilian and African instruments every week, and it's like beginning again. That's the beauty of music."

When Sammy was seventeen, he joined a band called Raices, which means "roots." The group played a mixture of Brazilian music, Latin music, and jazz. But the group was having a difficult time getting established, so Figueroa decided to move back to New York.

"I got a job selling records, and I played a gig here or there," he says. "Then Raices called and asked if I could come back and play with them. So I quit my job, moved back to Puerto Rico, and rehearsed with them for a year. Then we went to Miami to record an album. The record did really well



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in the United States because it was quite original. That was our gateway to play in New York at The Bitter End and clubs like that, and we opened for people like Miles Davis and David Sanborn."

When Raices broke up a couple of years later, Figueroa stayed in New York. "When I was playing in New York with Raices, a lot of people heard me," Figueroa says. "After Raices broke up I joined Herbie Mann's band for about a year, and after that I played with The Brecker Brothers Band, The Average White Band, and Sonny Rollins, and I started doing all the European jazz festivals. And it hasn't stopped since; I kept going from band to band. It was just the right time. There were a lot of bands going, but there weren't a lot of percussionists around who could fit in with different genres.

"The '70s and '80s were the great years of R&B, and that's when I had the honor and privilege of playing with Ashford & Simpson, Al Jarreau, and people like that. And during those same years, I joined Stanley Turrentine's band and also worked with Freddie Hubbard and Jaco Pastorius. By jumping from one genre to another, I was able to adopt more sounds and be creative and get into a whole new style of playing."

In retrospect, Figueroa says that his lack of experience with traditional conga rhythms probably helped him develop his own style and fit in with the new music that was being created, as he had to keep his ears open and find his place in the music rather than just supply a traditional conga part.

"A drummer named Les Perlman came to Puerto Rico in the early '60s to perform with a Las Vegas nightclub singer," Figueroa says. "He was one of the greatest drummers I ever saw in my life. Even though I was just a kid, he started talking to me. He said, 'You really want to know what swing is?' So he took me to his room and played me Tony Williams' *Spring* album. I was blown away. And then he played me *Mel Torme Swings At Schubert Alley* with Marty Paich's band, which was recorded back in the '50s. I was blown away again because it swung so hard. He said, 'Sammy, it comes down to swing. It has to mean something; it has to touch your heart. If music can do that to you, then you're on your way.'

"So I started practicing with Miles Davis's *Four & More* album, and to the Cannonball Adderley records with Roy McCurdy, because they were swinging hard. I didn't listen to conga players or percussionists because they weren't giving me what guys like Tony Williams were giving me. I decided to try playing swing with these guys on a conga drum and see what happened.

"Listening to great players showed me where time really was—playing in the center of the beat, not all over the place. If I played something right in the middle of that crack between the drummer and the bass player, it would swing. So I experimented with that, and that's what I was concentrating on that first night I played with Tony Williams."

Meanwhile, Figueroa was also starting to get calls for recording sessions. "Once I started working with The Brecker Brothers, Randy Brecker recommended me to someone for a record, then Michael Brecker recommended me to someone else, and it was like a chain reaction," Figueroa says. "One record led to another, and before I knew it I was playing with everybody.

"It was a period where everything was happening and all you had to do was be part of it. People had seen me perform with different groups, and they were looking for percussionists who could understand that it wasn't about overplaying, but rather about playing within the band."

Despite the fact that having a percussionist was still a fairly new concept for American groups in those days, Figueroa says he was lucky to work with drummers who were very open to the idea. In particular, he enjoyed working with Steve Gadd in a variety of settings.

"Steve Gadd is Mr. Groove," Figueroa says. "He'll give you room to play anything you want because he's so open to it. He's very respectful of percussionists. He just lets you weave in and out of his rhythmic patterns whenever you want to.

"I played with Steve recently at Birdland in New York, and after we played he said, 'Man, I want you to come to my house and

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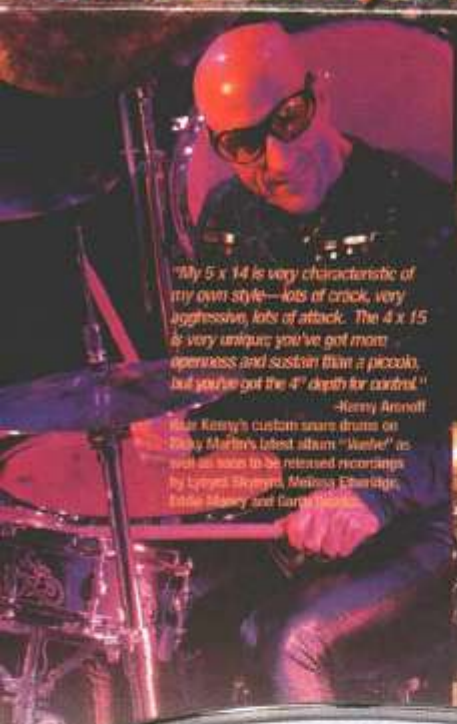

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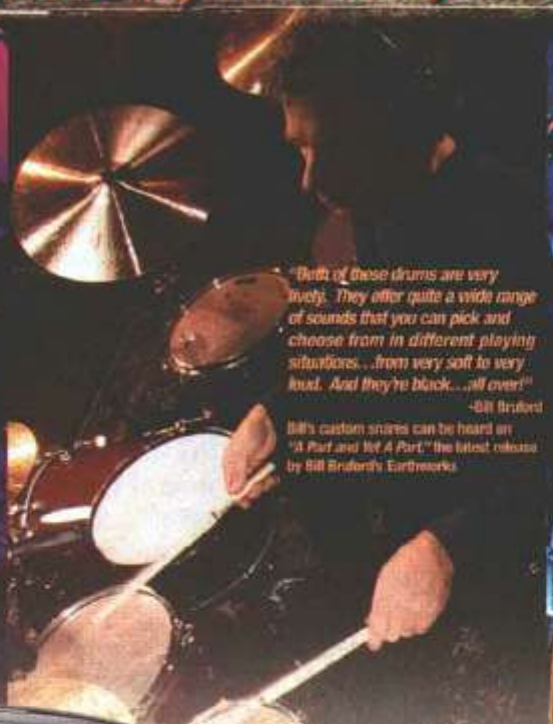

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teach me some new stuff.' For a guy like that, who is noted as one of the greatest drummers ever, to be open enough to make a remark like that really shows humility. Music is about experience, and how mature you are in life is how you're going to be as a musician.

"It's a growth process," Figueroa says, "because music is really about growing up. The more mature you are within yourself, the better chance you have of being open to new things. There are a bunch of kids out there coming up with great ideas, and I'm willing to learn from those kids. I'm always asking people, 'How do you do that? Teach me.' The drum is endless, like any musical instrument. It will never be totally discovered."

Figueroa suggests that drummers should listen to as many different genres of music as possible. "If you come to my house, I have thousands of records and CDs from one extreme to the other—from the Hi-Lo's back in the '50s to Russian music to R&B to electronic music," he says. "Whether it's Latin music, Italian music, or whatever, be open to the qualities in different styles that can give a drummer an open weaving for a percussionist to come in and complement what the drummer is doing. A percussionist and a drummer, when properly combined, can create more music together than a single musician can create. It's like a painting: You don't just paint with red, you also use blue and gold and all the different pastels. So when a drummer and percussionist are playing together, they have to leave room so that they can both weave themselves in and out of the music."

Figueroa also stresses the importance of being flexible and says that he plays different ways, depending on who he's working with. "All the drummers have different styles," he explains. "With some of them you can play less; with some of them you can play more. When you're playing with Vinnie Colaiuta, it's like a freight train, and you have to be on top of it. And that's the great thing about Vinnie, because he kicks your ass and makes you play.

"It's just a matter of being open to different styles and being relaxed. If you play the same with every drummer, it's going to clash at some point. But if you lay your ego down and sit there with the open heart of a child, you can really listen to what they're playing and then you can weave yourself in and out. It's a matter of opening your ears and saying, 'Where do I belong here?' Once you find that, even if you only play three notes, it's going to sound right."

Over the past decade, Figueroa has finally become more involved with his own traditional roots. "I joined Michel Camilo's band in the '90s, when the Latin craze really started happening," he explains. "Then I played with Ruben Blades, so I really started adapting myself into the Latin genre and learning it as best I could. But then I also played with rock 'n' roll bands like Van Halen. What made me unique, I guess, was that I had the experience of playing with so many diversified groups since the '60s."

As Figueroa began listening to the new music that was coming from Cuba, he decided that he wanted to be involved at a different level—that of producer. "A friend of mine from New York offered me the opportunity to co-produce Cuban bands for a German label," Figueroa explains. "Cuban bands can't be signed to US labels

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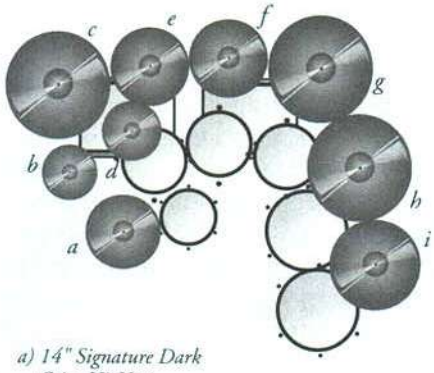

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f) 18" Signature Full Crash
g) 22" Signature Dry Heavy Ride
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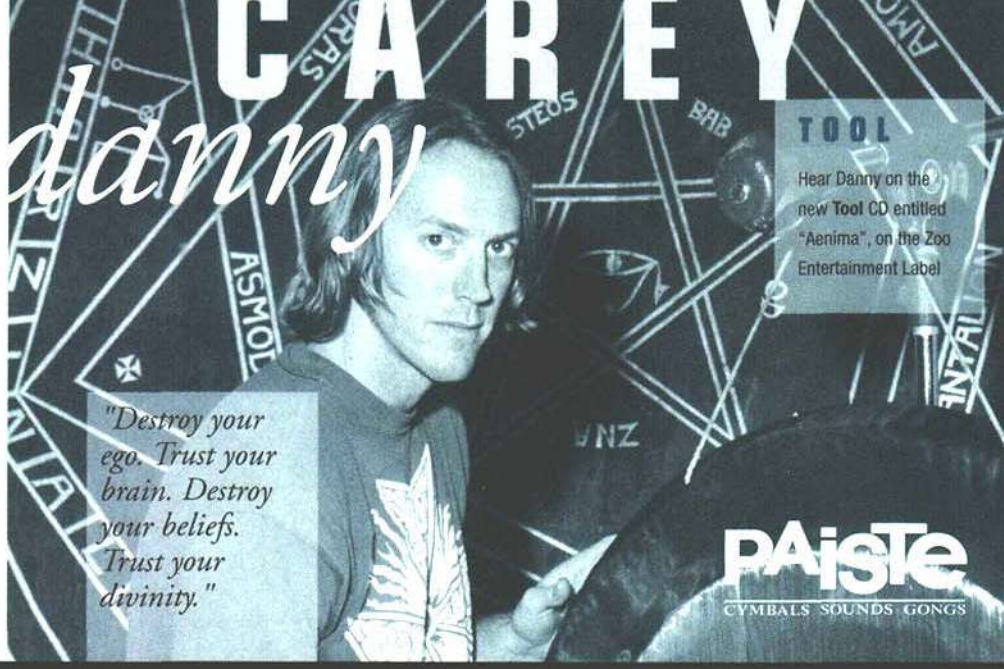

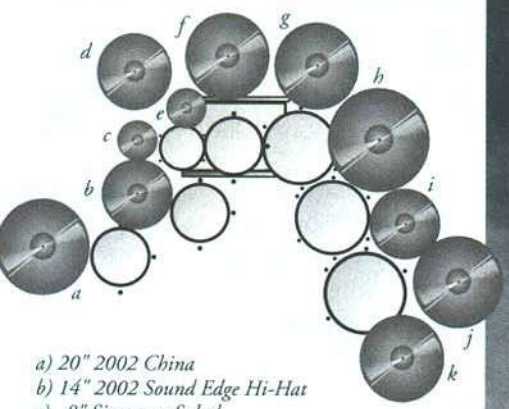

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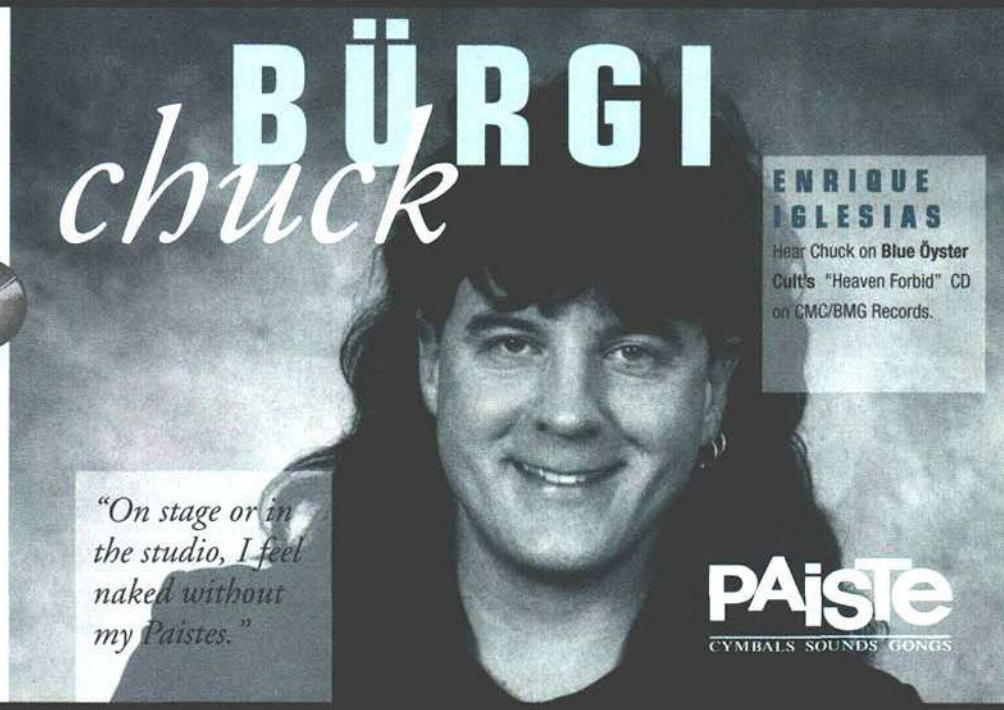

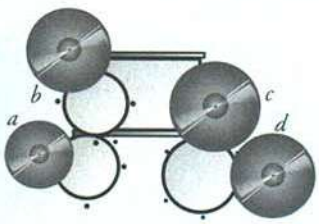

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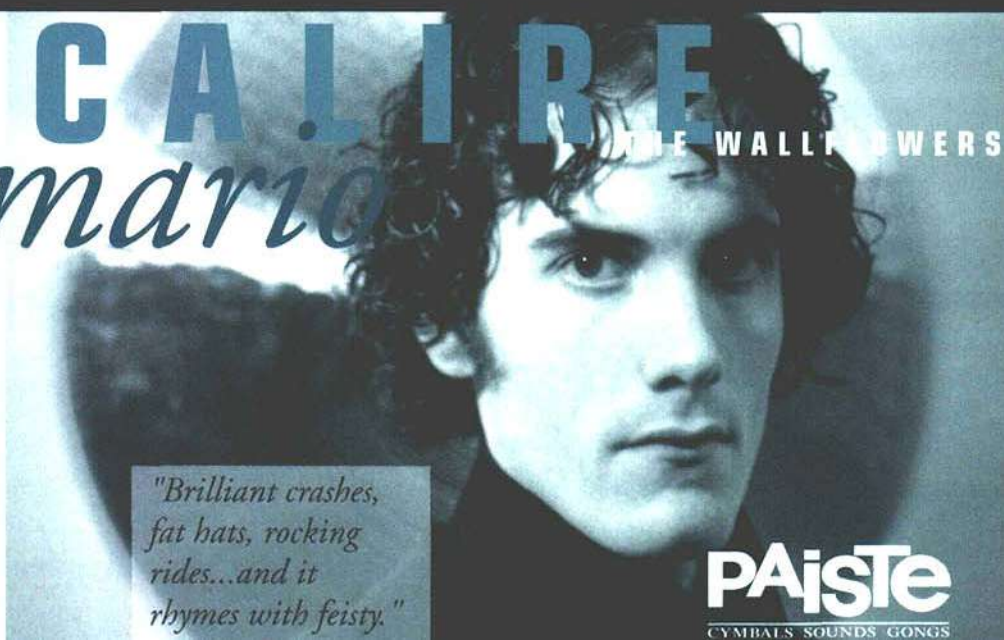

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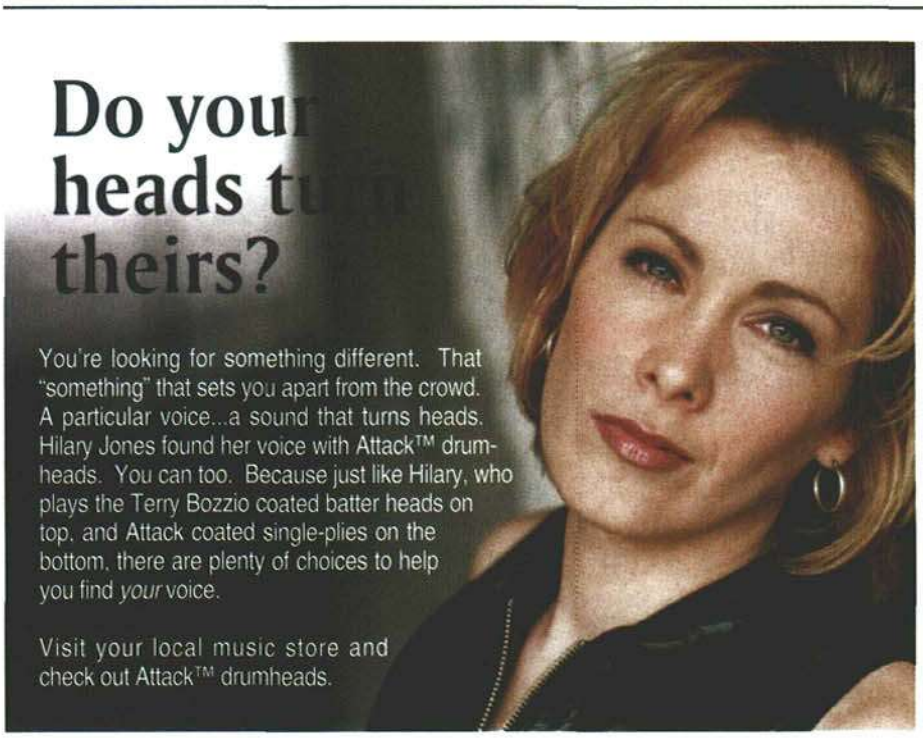
because of the embargo. So we went to Cuba and recorded some phenomenal groups like Vocal Sampling, Grupo Afro-Cuba, and Cuarto Espacio. The records came out and did very well, and I've been going to Cuba now for eight years and producing a lot of the groups for different European labels. In February, I went back to Cuba with MTV to produce the music for a Cuban segment of *Road Rules.* So through the art of playing, I've become a record producer."

Figueroa, who recently moved to Los Angeles, is currently working on a solo project. "My album will deal with Latin and Brazilian combined with drum 'n' bass and jungle," he says, adding that he hopes to have the album out by the end of the year. He and his wife, Maria Friedler-Figueroa, have recently started their own record label, Sammar Music, and their first project will be a 3-CD dance compilation titled *Planet Salsa,* which Sammy and Maria will produce together.

Being a percussionist would seem to be good training for being a producer, as both jobs require the ability to really listen to music and analyze it. "Exactly," Figueroa says. "And I feel like I'm relearning the art of playing with the new players. It's a matter of how much, at a certain age in your life, you are willing to step back and listen to the new stuff. You have to become a child again and learn from the new music. Vinnie Colaiuta told me recently, Tm just now starting to play,' and he's one of the greatest drummers. But I feel the same way. There's still so much to learn that it's unbelievable.

"You have to love what you do to make it happen," Figueroa says. "You've gotta love it so much that you're willing to give up everything to really play. And that's what I've always done—concentrated on playing the best I could."



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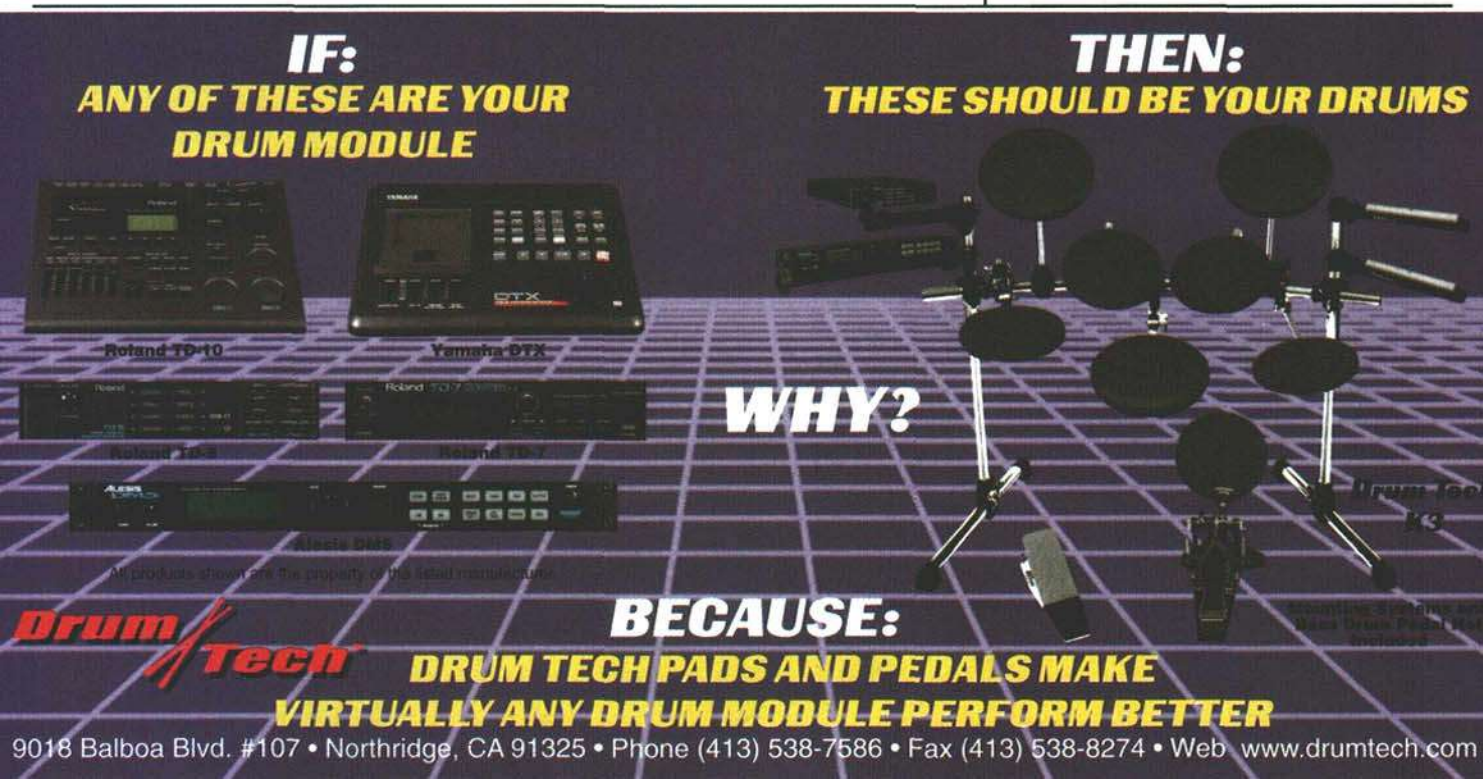

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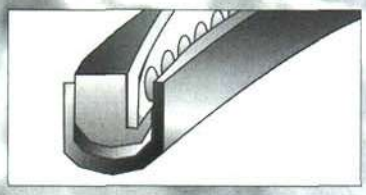

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The "Joy" Of Sitting In

by Frederick Bay

Man, it was a *terrible* gig. I've been drumming for twenty-five years, played countless shows on all sorts of stages, done a bit of recording, *and jeez,* I thought I'd paid my dues. Nope. Wrong-O!

I recently had one of the worst experiences I've ever had on a stage, so bad that I'd cry if I could only stop laughing. Heck, I'm still wondering how it *happened.* Let me tell you what went down, and maybe we can figure out why things went so wrong. (There's a lesson in this somewhere.)

Anything For A Gig

A band that I've been working with for a couple of months has been trying to get a few gigs lined up. One of the local clubs we're hoping to play decides on who to book by having hopefuls come out to their weekly "Open Mic'" night, where musicians essentially audition for the club. You get your chance to play four or five tunes. If they like you, you get a gig.

So what's the problem? Well, since the club is trying to check out a bunch of different acts, they hire one band to host the evening. That band sets up their equipment, and everybody who wants to play has to sit in on that gear. That's no problem for vocalists, guitarists, and bass players, because they basically get to use their own instruments and plug into the backline that's provided. But for drummers—well, for *this* drummer, anyway, it was a problem.

"Playin' that bass drum pedal was like wearin' another guy's underwear."

The Intro

I tried to do everything right. I got to the club early hoping that I could meet the drummer whose kit I would be using—you know, strike up a nice rapport with the guy so that everything would be cool. He showed up with an armload of stuff, so I went over to him, introduced myself, and offered to help him bring in the rest of his gear. The guy was a bit gruff: "I didn't know any other drummers were playing tonight." (Was he kidding?) Not a good start. But he was happy to let me help him carry the gear.

Once inside, he got to work setting up. This guy gave me the impression that he wanted to be left alone, but I thought I'd take another shot at being friendly: "Hey, I'm goin' to the bar. Want a beer?" His answer was a curt "No." (Not even a "Thanks anyway.") So I took the hint and made my way to the bar, hooking up with the rest of the guys from my band who had just arrived.

While the drummer was setting up, I nonchalantly checked out the kit—from a distance. It was an old Ludwig four-piece that was pretty beat up. He didn't have cases, his stands were rolled up in a frayed rag, and the cymbals looked ancient and as tarnished as any I've seen. (I *like* old cymbals that have character, so I didn't care what they looked like: I thought they might be fun to play.) The kit looked like it had lived a long, hard life. But like I said, I've been playing for a long time and I've sat in on other people's drums many times. I figured I'd certainly be able to make do on this kit. No problem.

Sit On This

The show began with the house band doing a few numbers. They played okay, and the drummer wasn't terrible; he had a very light touch and pretty much stayed out of the way of the band. From what I could hear of the drums and cymbals, yes, they sounded bad, but I still felt I could get something going on them.

A lot of musicians from the area were at the club, ready to play. (By the way, I'd certainly recommend that, if you're looking for work, you check out these types of things, because it's a great opportunity to network.) Luckily we were first on the list, so as soon as the house band finished we were called up.

The stage was about six inches off the main floor, and the drums were set up on a riser that was about six inches up from there. I stepped up on the drum riser and complimented the drummer on his performance, still trying to be polite. He was friendly at first, but then, when it sunk in that I was about to play his kit, he got serious. "Please don't move anything," he said sternly. "I have everything positioned right where I like it." "Hey, no problem," was my response, thinking that as soon as he walked off I'd move a couple of things ever so slightly, just enough so I could be somewhat comfortable. That's when the trouble started.

Joy (I mean problem) #1: I'm 6'1", he's 5'8" (maybe). I *had* to

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move the throne back. (Out of the corner of my eye I could see him glaring at me from the side of the stage.) The riser was small, and since he had set the kit up more or less in the middle, I could only move the throne back so far—right up against the wall. Unfortunately, it wasn't quite far enough. For me, playing the kit was going to be like trying to drive a car with the driver's seat set all the way forward.

Joy #2: A speaker on the wall. Now that my back was literally against the wall, I had an even bigger problem to deal with. The club had a permanently mounted monitor speaker on the back wall, above and just off-center behind the drum riser. Because I was against the wall, my head was right next to the speaker. The problem was, I had to tilt my head slightly to the left so I wouldn't bang it against the side of the speaker! Are we having fun yet?

Joy #3: The drums. Yep, they were *old,* and the heads were as beat up as any I've seen. They were tired old *Pinstripes* (even on the snare!), and had gobs of ripped and peeling duct tape on them. The bass drum had what looked like part of a mildewed packing blanket stuffed inside. No inspiration was going to be coming from these babies!

Joy #4: The cymbals. Remember when I said these were tarnished cymbals and that I thought they might have some character and be fun to play? Ha! First off, I think these cymbals had more tarnish than metal! Second, they weren't beautiful old *Ks* with lots of personality; these were heavy, bad-sounding slabs. The tones these cymbals produced weren't warm and round. They were dull, clangy, and painfully abrupt (like their owner).

Before you begin to think that I'm an idiot for not bringing my own cymbals.. .well, I did. But the word I got from everyone at the club—especially the other drummer—was that I *had* to get up on that stage and hit it. There was no time for changing gear.

Joy #5: The pedals. Like the rest of the kit, the pedals were ancient. The hi-hat stand was mushy, and it felt like my foot was sinking down 10" or 12" to close the hats (although it was only an inch, tops). I lessened the distance between the cymbals (he's *glaring* again) to a point where I was comfortable, but that distance wasn't enough to really get much of a sound out of them.

The bass drum pedal was a *whole* lot of fun. It was one of the famous old Ghost pedals. (It must have been: it obviously had died years ago.) The spring tension was very strange—loose and uncertain, like stepping down into a puddle. Its owner made it work, but I was gonna have trouble. Playin' that pedal was like wearin' another guy's underwear. What made it worse was that the throne was set very low, so my legs felt strained and my knees were in my face.

Joy #6: This is my favorite part: Just before the other drummer stepped off the riser, he remembered that he was unhappy with the sound of the bass drum. (He realized it *then?)* So he decided to remove the impact pad that was attached to the bass drum head. He quickly yanked it off, then left the stage. And what did that leave me with? A sticky spot. I played one note and the beater actually stuck to the head! The only thing I could do (on the fly) was change the height of the beater so it hit just above the trouble spot. Believe me, it didn't help with the feel of the pedal.

Let's Play!

Okay, so you've got the picture: I'm sitting behind this horrible-sounding kit, the hi-hat pedal feels very weird, the bass drum beater is sticking to the head, my knees are in my face—and my head is tilted to one side. Ready to make some music?

From note one I knew I wasn't going to be able to do much in this situation, so I played as simply as I could. We played five tunes. The first was a shuffle, and it was a nightmare—the beater still had some residue gunk on it and wasn't coming off the head all that well. The second tune was straight rock—1 and 3 on the kick, 2 and 4 on the snare—and it came off okay. Then we did a neo-swing thing (I felt like I couldn't swing from a rope), then a heavier rock tune (played "neanderthal"), and then we ended with a ballad that I pretty much just sat and listened to. I felt like I was sucking up the joint—and I was *so* happy to be doing it in front of a lot of other musicians.

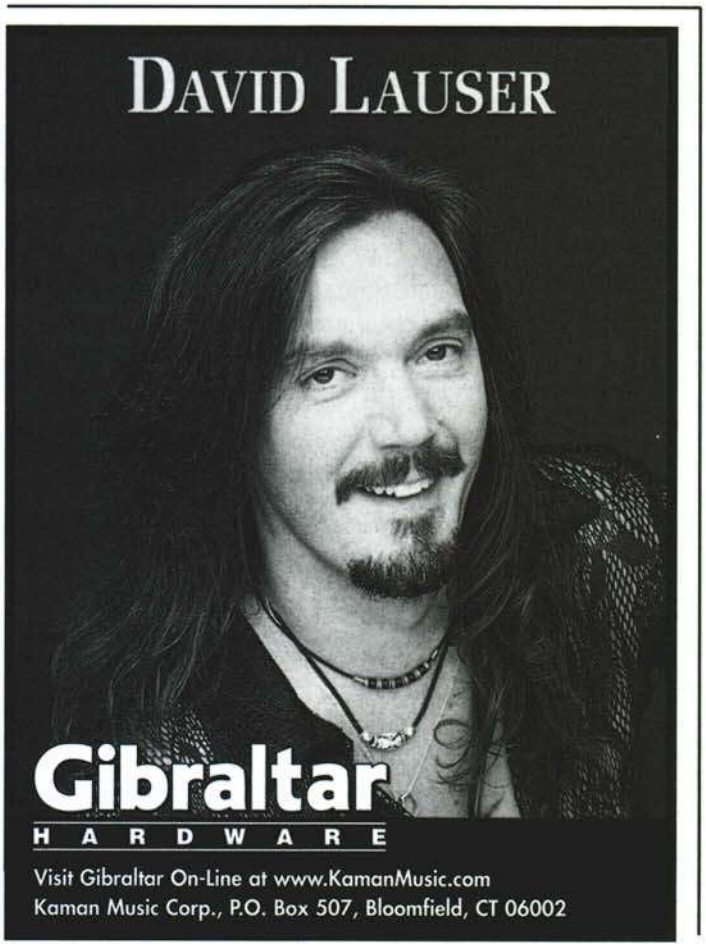
Ready for a shock? Our band went over pretty well, and the club booked us! (The other guys must have played well!) And after our set the other drummer actually came up to me as nice as could be and said, "Yeah man, really dug your playing. Very tasteful." Oh brother.

Learn Your Lesson

Okay, what did I do wrong? (Please learn from these mistakes.) Well, obviously I should have spoken up a bit more and taken the time to get the kit set up in a way that was at least somewhat comfortable. I don't know why I was intimidated by the other guy. *He* wasn't going to hire me, the club was.

My *biggest* mistake? Arrogance. I thought I could go in there, sit in on anybody's kit, and make the music happen.

After what I went through, I think I've learned my lesson.



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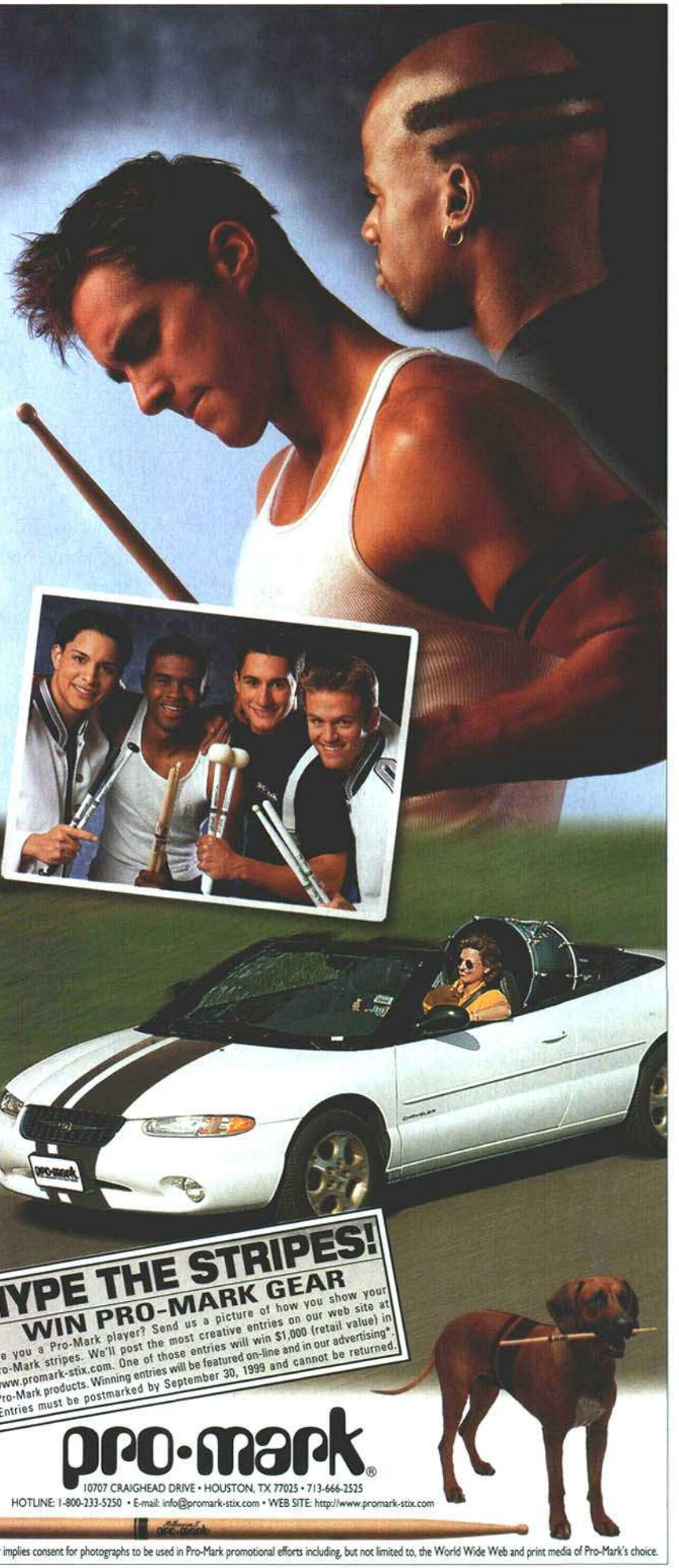

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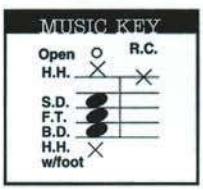
SWINGIN' IN A MODERN AGE

part 2

Copyin' The Cats

by Daniel Glass

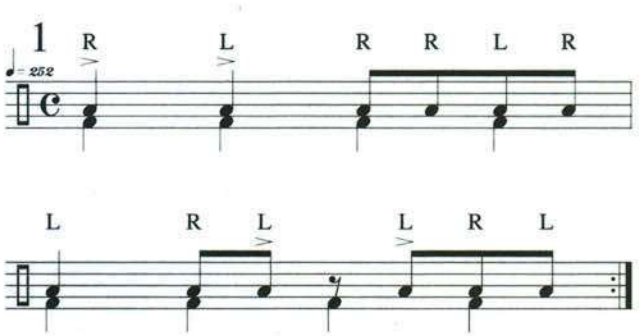
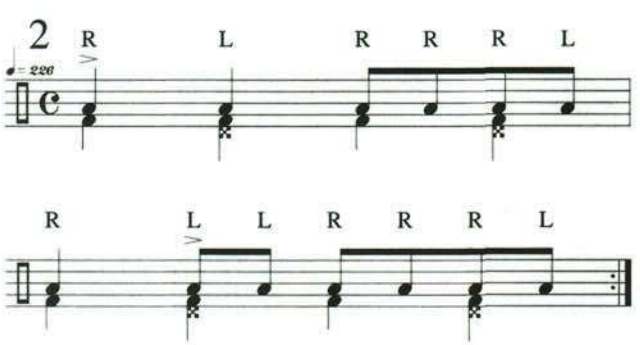


Last month, in the first part of this series, I discussed how many of today's neo-swing drummers came to swing through rockabilly, punk, and ska, as opposed to the traditional avenues of big band and jazz. The influence of these "roots" styles has brought to swing a rambunctious attitude not seen in years, and much of the genre's newfound popularity can be attributed to a more "rock 'n' roll"-style presentation.

Unfortunately, too many of today's aspiring Gene Krupas have only other neo-swing bands as their influence. Understandably, these up & comers are a bit confused as to how to begin sifting through forty years of swing history to get to the real roots. It seems a daunting task. However, if we neglect our roots, we'll be hard-pressed to channel our enthusiasm into anything more than just another shallow trend. That said, this segment of "Swingin' In A Modern Age" will focus on the classic artists who've had the greatest impact on today's neo-swingers.

Probably the most identifiable anthem of swing's "golden age" (which lasted from the mid-'30s through WWII) is "Sing, Sing, Sing," the vehicle that catapulted Benny Goodman—and his tub-thumper Gene Krupa—into superstar status. Krupa's performance, complete with thunderous tom-tom intro, cymbal flourishes, and stick twirls, inspired legions of drummers to start pounding. The song's so-called "jungle groove" became a signature for many big band drummers (check out Buddy Rich on "Hawaiian War Chant" and Cozy Cole on "Topsy, Part II") and inspired modern numbers like Royal Crown Revue's "Hey Pachuco" and Cherry Poppin' Daddies' "Zoot Suit Riot."

Over the years, Krupa often modified his famous groove, so two versions are transcribed here. (Be sure to swing the 8th notes!)



In many ways, this type of groove symbolizes the best aspects of swing drumming—creative and spontaneous, but backed by a rock-solid foundation. Check out the imaginative sticking patterns, which utilize double and even triple strokes, yet note the continual presence of all four quarter notes on the bass drum. In swing music, the job of the kick (along with the upright bass) is to produce a continuous pulse that will drive the rest of the band. Playing "four on the floor" is a fairly basic concept, one that most drummers probably learned in their first few lessons, but mastering the technique is no simple matter. It requires that the foot maintain a feather-like touch, even at very high speeds or when the hands are playing with a great deal of force.

To help develop the proper foot technique, think along the lines of dribbling a basketball, where you allow the ball's return motion

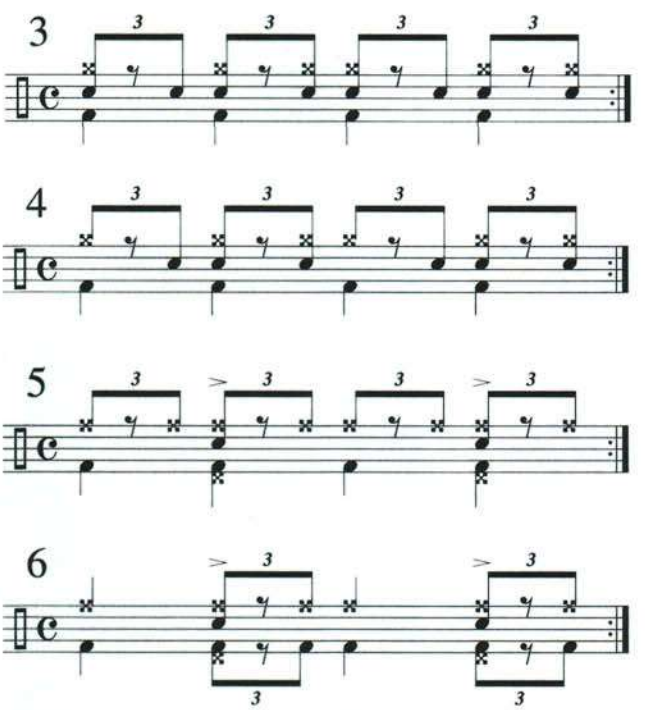
to push your hand back up to its starting point. The same physical principal should work with your pedal. By relaxing your foot after each stroke, you can maintain the pedal's momentum with only a minimal amount of downward force.

Here's another bass drum tip: Play four to the bar with your heel down. This will keep your foot from getting in the way of the pedal's natural motion, and will also help pull the maximum tone out of your kick.

Also influential on today's swing musicians are the "honkers and shouters" of jump blues—guys like Louis Jordan, Wynonie Harris, and Big Joe Turner. With smaller bands, snappy threads, and wild stage shows, these artists bridged the gap between the class of the big band era and the wildness of rock 'n' roll as we know it today. Although more stripped down than their powerhouse predecessors, jump bands still swung like crazy, and in the late '40s and '50s they were responsible for keeping jazz on the pop charts.

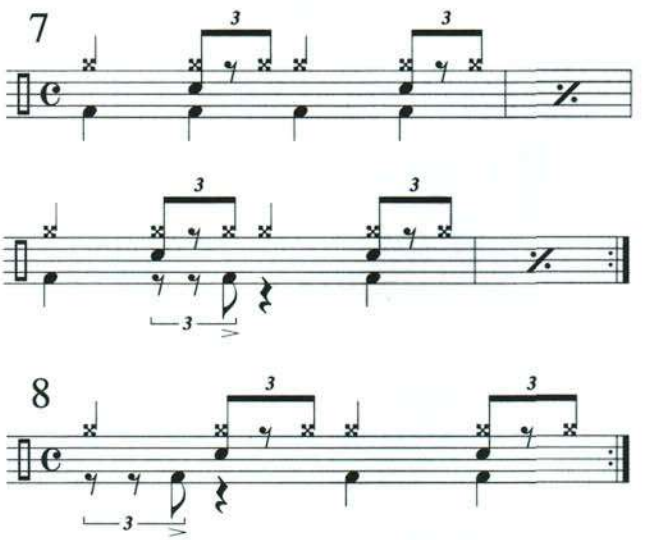
Altoist Louis Jordan, who got his start with drummer/big band leader Chick Webb, created a style that was rooted in blues, but enhanced by kooky lyrics, smart horn arrangements, and an irresistible shuffle beat. Songs like "Saturday Night Fish Fry" and "What's The Use Of Gettin' Sober (When You Gonna Get Drunk Again)" personify Jordan's good-time approach and made him one of the most popular and influential artists of the post-war era.

Louis Prima, another veteran of the big band era (he actually wrote "Sing, Sing, Sing"), also features prominently in the neo-swing renaissance. Prima's greatest notoriety came during the glamorous Rat Pack era of '50s and '60s Las Vegas, when his energetic performances set the standard for lounge acts and made him just as popular as the showroom headliners. His tunes "Just A Gigolo" and "Jump, Jive 'N Wail" proved to be huge remake hits for David Lee Roth and Brian Setzer, respectively, demonstrating that a great song can span time and social climate alike. Check out these examples of jump swing shuffles:



Notice again the presence of "four to the bar" on the bass drum, as well as the various snare combinations. When played correctly, these shuffles have incredible fluidity, and seem to bounce along effortlessly.

Neo-swing drummers have somewhat modified their approach to jump by adding a heavier backbeat, making the grooves more accessible to rock-oriented audiences (and radio programmers), who have come to expect a louder 2 and 4.

To further understand this comparison, let's examine the much ballyhooed "Jump, Jive 'N Wail." In Louis Prima's original version (yep, the one featured in last year's popular Gap commercial), the groove during the verse and chorus sections is a tight shuffle as previously described, with offbeat accents on the bass drum that match the horn figures.

During the solo that follows each chorus, the drummer really opens up, unabashedly bashing out the backbeat on ride cymbal and snare.

In Brian Setzer's version of "Jump, Jive 'N Wail," on the other hand, drummer Bernie Dresel keeps the backbeat going throughout and creates more of a rockabilly feel on the chorus. The quirky, offbeat rhythmic "hiccups" dominant in the original recording have been greatly minimized. This is not to criticize or praise either version, but only to point out stylistic differences between classic and modern swing.

Contrary to what you may think, many of the artists mentioned in this piece still perform today, and are very worth seeking out. Sam Butera, Louis Prima's right-hand man during the glory years, appears regularly in the lounges of Vegas and does an exquisite job of re-creating the magic of a Prima show. Keely Smith (also a Prima alum), The Treniers, and Big Jay McNeely—not to mention *Five Guys Named Moe,* the Broadway tribute to Louis Jordan—all

continue to keep alive the traditions of jump and swing.

In my opinion, it's our sacred duty to keep listening to these veterans, because their artform, which dominated this country's music scene for half a century, deserves more than just a cursory nod. It's our responsibility as musicians to understand the old so that the new music we're creating today still makes sense.

In the next segment, "Making Your Kit Thunder," we'll tell you how to get that classic swing sound.

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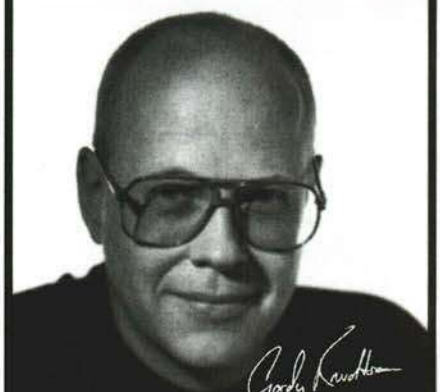

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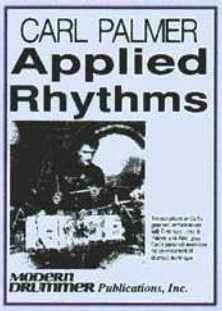

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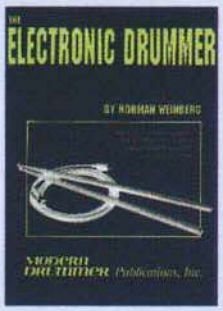

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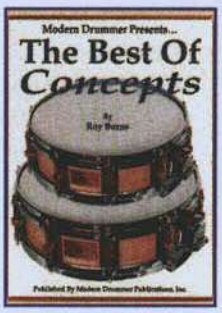

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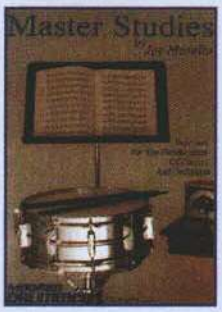

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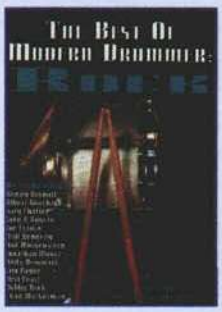

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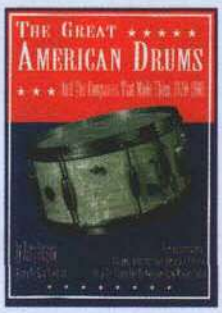

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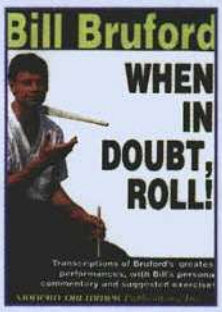

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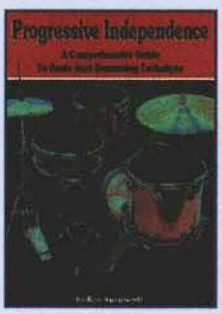

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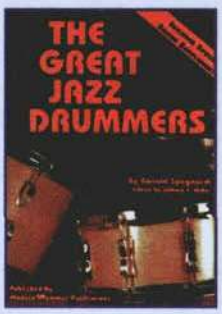

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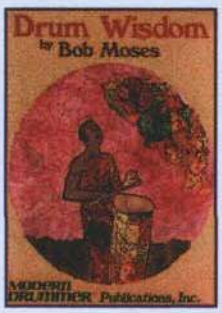

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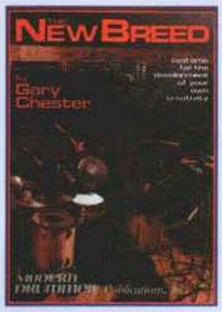

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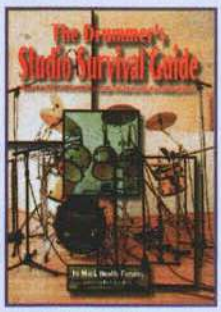

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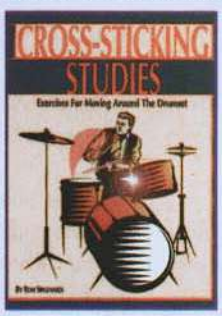

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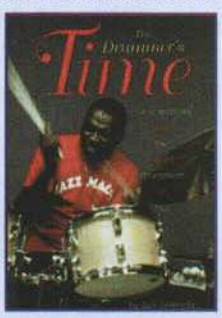

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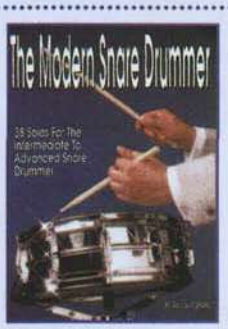

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The Graceful Drummer

by Ron Hefner

There's a great photo of Jo Jones on page 159 of Burt Korall's excellent book *Drummin' Men.* The caption reads, "The man who played like the wind."

Anyone familiar with Papa Jo knows that this statement isn't about technique per se. It's about Jo's strikingly poetic and graceful approach to the drumset. Seeing this photo and caption took me back to a time years ago when my bandmembers and I were watching a TV show on a Sunday morning. A small jazz group was featured, with Jo on drums. Things were swinging along nicely, and it came time for Jo to play a four-bar break. With that infectious smile of his, Jo pulled off one of his sly floor-tom crossovers, along with some clever interaction between the snare drum and bass drum. He didn't do anything technically blinding, but the guys in my band fell on the floor! The guitar player commented that it was the coolest thing he had ever seen. What Jo did was perfectly timed, flawlessly executed, musical—and *graceful.*

My dictionary defines "grace" as "beauty or harmony of form, movement, manner, mode of expression, etc." Sounds nice, but when you think about it, gracefulness is not a characteristic that seems to be common to drummers. We have to get a sound from the drums and cymbals, and we have to make it fit and enhance the music. What's the big deal whether we do it "gracefully" or not—as long as it sounds good?

Here's an example that may help to answer that question: Once, I was in a club with a drummer friend, listening to a band. The band's drummer played a thirty-two-bar chorus. My friend commented that the drummer sounded tense. I agreed, and, looking at the drummer in question, I could *see* that he was tense. His arms looked stiff, his sticks were "jabbing" at the drums rather than glancing off of them, and his face was contorted. The whole thing looked like a great effort for him. And, as a result, it was an effort to *listen* to him!

If you want to do some useful research on this topic, check out the *Legends Of Jan Drumming* videos, Volumes I and II. Talk about lessons in gracefulness! I have always been an admirer of Big Sid Catlett, based on old recordings I've heard, as well as things I've read about him. But Volume I of this video gave me my first opportunity to see the man in action. More than anything else, it was Sid's gracefulness and ease that made all drummers revere him.

Louie Bellson mentions that because Sid was so big, it was expected that he would have a rough touch on the drums. But Sid surprised you when he sat down to play: He had a very delicate touch. In the *Legends* video, Sid is cooking at a high velocity, yet his hands are seemingly moving in slow motion! Sid is utterly relaxed; his moves are the essence of fluidity.

What is the key to grace in drumming? It's really about economy of motion: getting the most sound with the least movement. In addition, there is a muscular element that needs to be dealt with. When the opposing muscles are "antagonizing" each other, the resultant movement (and subsequent musical effect) is tense and stiff. When the opposing muscles are able to cooperate together, the results are effortless and fluid.

> "Grace in drumming is really about economy of motion; getting the most sound with the least movement."

In countless *MD* interviews, drummers have talked about how they practice in front of a mirror. This is about more than just looking good! It's about taking an objective look at the moves being made, to make sure that they are correct. I never did this when I was younger, but a serendipitous event brought it to my attention. One night years ago, I was playing in a club that had a wall-sized mirror adjacent to the bandstand. With the typical narcissism of youth, I spent a fair part of the night admiring my reflection. But after a while, I noticed that my hands were falling awkwardly on the snare drum. The problem was that I am extremely tall, and have a tendency to tower over the drums. I had the snare drum set fairly low, and my sticks—especially my left one—were coming down on the drum at an extreme angle. Anyone with a rudimentary knowledge of physics knows that this is inefficient: A stick won't bounce easily unless it is near-parallel to the drumhead. Look at the videos of drummers like Buddy Rich and Louie Bellson. Both of them have the snare drum high enough that there is not an extreme angle between the stick and the head.

I remedied this problem by simply raising the snare drum. Not only did I find it easier to get a bounce out of the sticks, but, after a short period of readjustment, I also noticed an increase in comfort and relaxation when I played. In effect, my playing had

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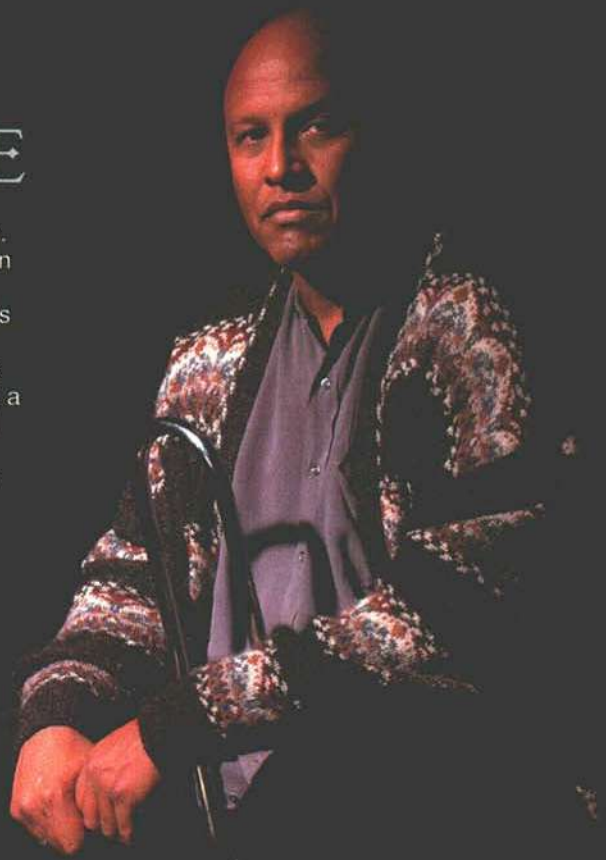

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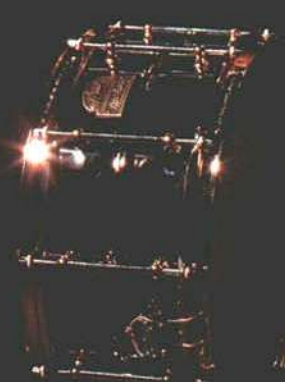

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become more *graceful.* Here again, remember the visual aspect of grace and its importance: The way it looks has a direct correlation to the way it sounds.

A good way to begin analyzing your own "grace factor" is with a pair of sticks on a pad or a snare drum. Simply play some alternating, hand-to-hand single strokes. Start slowly. Watch your hands and sticks. Are you trying hard to control the strokes, using your fingers? If so, try "losing" control: Allow the sticks to bounce naturally, using your wrists—*not* your fingers—to make the downstrokes. Dave Weckl talks about this in his most recent *MD* interview [April '98]. Dave's experience with master teacher Freddie Gruber taught him, "When the stick is balanced, you can hold your left hand out straight [using traditional grip], hold the stick with your thumb, and just use a wrist stroke. The fingers don't really have anything to do with it." In addition, says Dave, you must be aware of not trying to control the upstroke. He says Freddie taught him that "pulling the stick back up" is awkward because "that's *you* doing all the work" instead of allowing the stick to rebound naturally.

Dave adds that the masters had this figured out a long time ago. True, but for some reason this lesson seems to have gotten lost along the way for many drummers. Perhaps it's the higher volume of today's music that has forced many drummers to "try harder." Ironically, the graceful, natural-bounce approach will ultimately give a drummer more volume. As Dave says, "This is where the power comes from—lowering the hand and allowing the rebound."

The pedals are next, and the exact same principle applies. Stomping a bass drum pedal and smashing the beater into the head will produce impact and volume, but it is simply inefficient. Instead, try to apply some "grace" to the stroke, using the ankle to whip the pedal forward, then releasing the beater for a natural rebound.

I know there is a lot of debate about heel-down versus heel-up playing. I think either (or a combination of the two) can work well—but the "no-no" here, in terms of efficiency, is using the entire leg. There is simply no reason to put the entire weight of the leg into a pedal stroke—just as there is no reason to put the entire weight of the arm into a stick stroke. Have a look at the drummer down the street who plays this way for a lesson in gracelessness and inefficiency. As the wrist should be the pivot point in sticking, so should the ankle be the pivot point in pedaling.

And what of the rest of the body? Here again, the producers of the *Legends* videos have given us some invaluable source material. Aside from the aforementioned Big Sid, check out one of his admirers in Volume I: Max Roach. Max's group is playing at a ferocious tempo. Max is all over the drums, catching accents, shaping the form of the piece—and his upper body barely moves. Max knows that less motion translates into less effort.

Max was young when this piece was filmed, but for others, grace seems to come with age—as it did for the great Sonny Payne. Anyone familiar with Sonny knows that you simply had to *see* the man perform to fully appreciate his artistry. His segment on Volume II of the *Legends* video is an amazing thing to witness. It's an old black & white kinescope of the Basie band playing the drum showcase piece "Old Man River." Sonny was still young at that time, and was eager to show off his chops. His solo is musically well-conceived, echoing the themes of the piece and following the form of the composition brilliantly. But at this early point in his career, Sonny didn't have his famous "flash" smoothed out to the point of gracefulness. He really gets frantic in places, dropping a stick here and there, and ends the solo with his trademark stick-tossing and twirling. The overall impression is one of excitement, but there's a certain edginess, a lack of finesse.

I saw Sonny with Basie some years after that particular performance. Clearly, the years behind the drums had taught him the importance of graceful body movement. How he had changed! The twirling and tossing were still there, but now they were beautifully incorporated into the music. When the band would hit one of those famous Basie *sforzando* accents, Sonny would nail the crash cymbals like a snake striking its prey, the sticks effortlessly twirling like high-speed propellers. In his solo, he launched into an extended single-stroke roll on both the snare drum *and* the bass pedal, interspersed with crash-cymbal accents *and* blindingly fast stick twirling. But Sonny wasn't even sweating! The frenzy of the earlier days was gone. Every move he made (and he made *lots* of them) was perfectly timed, perfectly executed, and perfectly graceful. He simply galvanized the audience that night. But it was more than just his showmanship—it was that, plus his mastery, control, and *grace.*

Of course, all drummers aren't showmen. But all drummers *are* the "drivers" of the music. My driver's ed teacher in high school used to talk about the importance of smooth motions when driving, as opposed to jerky ones. We drummers want to give our fellow musicians a smooth ride, do we not? I don't care if you're a country drummer, a jazz drummer, or a head-banger. Get your set in front of a mirror and check yourself out. What you see is what you hear!

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Brett Barnes

Thirty-three-year-old Brett Barnes has a masters degree in percussion and a bachelors degree in music education from the University of Arkansas. He's active as a music educator, and is a certified schoolteacher. But it's as a performing and recording drummer/percussionist that he's found his current niche.

Brett has performed with the Gate Brothers, Ernie Watts, Rick Danko, Bill Watrous, Ray Stevens, Aretha Franklin, and many others. In 1992 he recorded and toured the South with the rock band Rellik. He toured the Northeast with the reggae band Jah Idren, and worked the East Coast with DC-based country groups Bandolero and Aged In The Hills.

Brett moved to Las Vegas recently, and has since performed in a wide variety of situations in the finest hotels on "The Strip." He currently divides his time between LV country artists Sandra Lee & Brittini, an alternative band called Seminiferous, and a hot ska band called Floor 13. The latter group's exciting self-produced CD *Show Me What You Got* reveals Brett as a drummer with groove, drive, and seemingly unlimited energy. Brett also subs with a variety of Las Vegas acts with such colorful names as Uncle Sugar & The Sweet Daddies, The Moaning Black Snakes, and Shadow Canyon, and plays a steady Monday-nighter with Faultline at the city's popular Sand Dollar blues lounge.

Brett's gear varies from gig to gig, but his basic kit is a Tama *Royalstar* with either a Remo or a Ludwig snare, Zildjian, Sabian, and UFIP cymbals, and KAT, ddrum, Roland, and Alesis electronics. He looks forward to expanding his performing and recording career.

Chuck Treece

Chuck Treece is a multi-threat musician, one of a small community of Philadelphia-based session players whose credits make you wonder why you don't already know his name. He played bass on Billy Joel's *River Of Dreams,* drummed on the theme for TV's *Clueless,* and sang backup on the Bad Brains' *Quickness* album. He's toured with Urge Overkill (on bass), The Disposable Heroes Of Hiphopracy (on guitar), and G. Love & Special Sauce, HuffaMoose, and The Goats (on drums). Perhaps his most esoteric achievement is drumming on a song called "Swallow My Pride" on a fan-club-only 7" put out by Pearl Jam. (Can you say "versatile"?)

Chuck released a punk-pop solo album called *Dreamin'* (Caroline) in 1990, and has founded several bands over the years: the '80s skate-core band McRad, the '90s melodically groovy Black Beans, and the recent hardcore hip-hop trio Supergrub. In 1990 he hooked up with remix producers The Butcher Brothers, and has since worked on remixes of songs by everyone from Amy Grant to Sting. In addition, earlier this year he recorded a CD called *Libido* (TVT) with alternative/ska/funk band Buck-O-Nine. Current projects include touring and recording with melodic folk-rockers Aunt Pat and singer-songwriter Nancy Falkow. And he continues to gig with local Philly bands "too numerous to mention."

Chuck plays and endorses Boom Theory electronic percussion, Paiste cymbals, Pro-Mark sticks, and Aquarian heads. He plans to keep busy as one of the East Coast's most in-demand musical "hired guns."

Dan Earhart

"Drums literally saved my life," says Spokane, Washington's Dan Earhart. "At an early age I fell in with the wrong crowd. Drums were a reason to get out before it was too late. Since then I've had tons of fun playing clubs, fairs, and concerts. Playing drums is therapeutic for me; it builds confidence and self-esteem."

Confidence is a distinct element of Dan's drumming. His demo tape combines impressive solo work with solid behind-the-band playing in styles ranging from country ballads to blues/funk, and from pop to alternative rock. "I pride myself on being well-rounded," says Dan. "Jack of all trades and master of none, maybe—but I keep working!" According to Dan, his influences are everyone from the cover artists on *MD* to local drummers. "I feel you can learn something from everyone and every situation."

Dan is currently touring clubs in the Pacific Northwest with an original/cover band called Renegade Railways Inc. The band is constantly busy, and has generated some label interest. And when that group *isn't* working, Dan tours part-time with a country band based out of Nashville, doing the fair circuit. He also teaches, and does studio sessions whenever possible.

As for equipment, Dan states simply, "You can never have too many drums. I use Tama, Ludwig, Premier, Rogers, DW, and Pearl drums, Zildjian and Sabian cymbals, LP percussion, Remo *RotoToms,* Roland electronics...and the list goes on." His goals are to move to the next professional level: record label support and major tours. "I'm grateful to have made a living doing what I dearly love," Dan concludes. "I hope to continue that, and to be a positive role model to younger kids."

If you'd like to appear in *On The Move,* send us an audio or video cassette of your best work (preferably both solo and with a band) on three or four songs, along with a brief bio sketch and a high-quality color or black & white close-up photo. (Polaroids are not acceptable. Photos will not be paid for or credited.) The bio sketch should include your full name and age, along with your playing style(s), influences, current playing situation (band, recording project, freelance artist, etc.), how often and where you are playing, and what your goals are (recording artist, session player, local career player, etc.). Include any special items of interest pertaining to what you do and how you do it, and a list of the equipment you use regularly. Send your material to On The Move, Modern Drummer Publications, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009. Material **cannot** be returned, so please **do not** send original tapes or photos.

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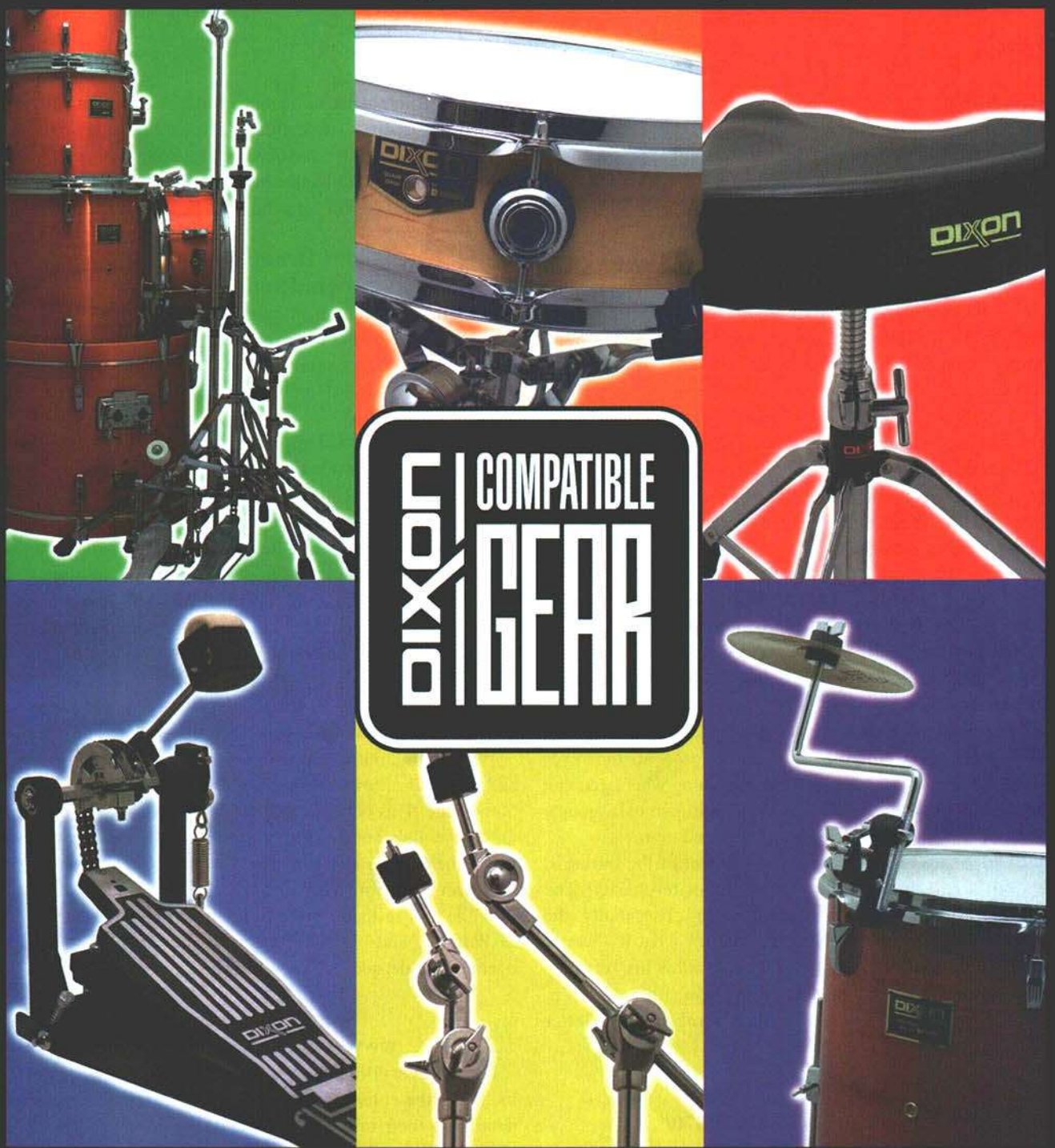

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Y2K Not?

by Matt Peiken

Let's face it: With this Y2K thing hanging over our heads, we're all doomed. So let me point you to as many drum-related Web sites as I can before global fallout turns us into dust or, at the very least, makes us late for our next gig.

The Definitive Drum Tab Archives
www.plaza.v-wave.com/banzai/drumtabs/

So many *Drums Online* readers have pointed this site to me that I suspect it's a conspiracy. No word on whether Paul Hoskinson, gatekeeper of The Definitive Drum Tab Archives, has anything to do with this. Regardless, this site is notable if for no other reason than selection.

There are tabs of hundreds of bands and artists here, from obscure to renowned, and in a variety of musical styles. Tabs are presented in four formats—all done typewriter-style—so there's a fairly steep learning curve no matter where your skills are in traditional chart-reading. You can also submit your own tabs and join in a drummer's discussion group.

Drums On The Web
www.drumsontheweb.com

Drums On The Web must be concerned with Y2K, too. It's an online drum shop touting "Internet specials and blowouts" at more than fifty percent off.

I didn't purchase anything from the site, but I scouted dozens of top brands—represented in pro to beginner's lines—at some eye-popping prices. There's an extensive online catalog where you can check out details on scores of world percussion, cymbals, gongs, heads, sticks and mallets, instructional videos, and more.

Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez, vice-president of the business, also puts out a call for donations to his favorite charity: The Desperate Drum Diggers Digital Dreamers Fund. Essentially, the guy needs money for a laptop computer, and for what it's worth, he promises to put one percent of each sale towards his "dream." Call the IRS to see if this "donation" is tax-deductible. If you're nice, Horacio will email you his free drum-related newsletter every month.

Tomas Howie Drum Web
www.geocities.com/SoHo/9870/

Few drum companies put together as clean and attractive a site as Tomas Howie has here. It's basic—lessons, links, and what-not—but my favorite part is a concise, easy-to-understand "how to" guide on reading charted music. This area could use sound samples, but it's still a wonderful starting point for anyone interested in learning what all the lines and black ovals are all about.

Howie also gives us detailed, illustrated columns on technique, tuning, ambidexterity, and rudiments, along with preparing your "gig box" with the diligence of a Boy Scout. There's even a Q&A section for anyone still scratching his head over the other sections.

Drum Network
www.drumnetwork.com

Hunt for used equipment in the classifieds, get online estimates of what it would cost to have your "dream" drumkit, and browse "the world's largest selection" of drumsticks. You'll also learn some fresh moves in a sort of "lick of the day" department.

Drummer's Stuff
www.drummerstuff.com

The name says it all. Browse through a "drummers wanted" classified section with ads from around the country, or submit an ad saying you're available. Buy and sell drum equipment and post a link to your own drum-related site. There's a drummers' discussion board and advice columns on four-way independence and other chops-builders. Michael Rosmore updates this site every month with new drumming-related links.

Paul Wertico
www.pubweb.nwu.ed/~pwe574/

Want to find out where Paul's performing next? Just type in the address, and an on-screen gig alert pops up before you see the home page. This is probably how Paul's family keeps tabs on him. Of course, he's not just trying to sell tickets. He also wants to sell you some CDs, videos, and maybe a custom drumkey or two. You can order right from his Web site.

While you're there, listen to a clip from Paul's latest CD, *Live In Warsaw,* and browse the educational articles he's published over the last decade.

Spaun Drum Company
www.home.inreach.com/spaun/

Here's everything you want to know about Spaun Drums, including the company's history and philosophical manifesto and details on their mammoth 16- and 24-ply snare drums. There's also a piece-by-piece guide stacking Spaun against other high-end drum lines, along with a list of endorsers and a *Modern Drummer* review for the skeptical reader.

Tip us off to your drumming Web site at mapeiken ©pioneerplanet. infi.net.

Odds And Ends From Around The Web

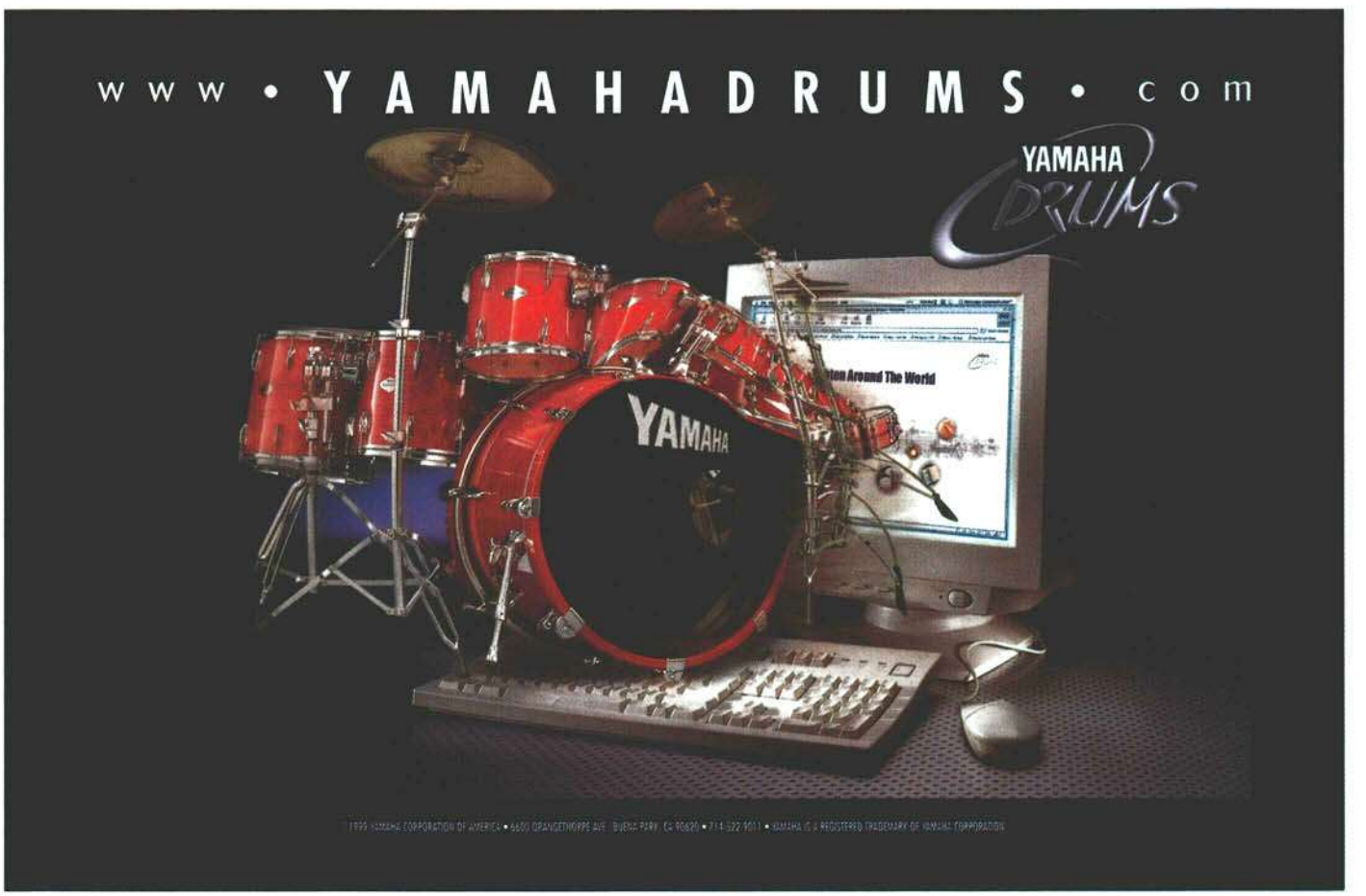
Dace Online Drum Club
www.members.tripod.com/~dacedrumclub/default.html
They bill themselves as an online drumming collective that produces an online-only newsletter. There's a hodgepodge of advice, articles, drummer jokes, first-person perspectives, and drummers' links.

Drumset Artistry
www.drumsetartistry.com/
Garey Williams sells a range of "educational materials for the goal-oriented drummer." Click on "biography" to end the mystery about exactly who Garey is.

www.rodel.demon.co.uk
Roger Odell's bio, setup, influences, and news from his drum stool.

www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/Club/4986/gavwele.htm
Andrea Sciacca's ode to British "rhythmic illusionist" Gavin Harrison, with versions in English and Italian.

www.members.xoom.com/only1take/
Sean O'Rourke's resume, sound "snips" (as he calls them), and highlights from his sit-in with Bela Fleck & The Flecktones.



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Build Your Own Trap Case

For a low-cost drum/hardware case that you can make yourself, stop by your local discount store and buy the largest Rubbermaid container. The model I'm referring to—a large, rectangular "tub" with a lid—usually costs around $20.

Next, go to the hardware store and get four 2" or 3" casters. You want two that are fixed, and two that swivel. These should cost around $5 each. At the same time, buy a 5/8"-thick piece of plywood large enough to cover the outside bottom of your container, sixteen 1/4" x 1 1/4" stove bolts (with nuts and lock washers), a package of at least fifty 1/4" flat washers, and a small box of 1" drywall screws.

Attach the casters to the corners of the plywood, using the stove bolts, nuts, flat washers, and lock washers. You want the flat heads of the stove bolts to be flush with the top of the plywood, which will be what the bottom of the tub sits on. Then attach the tub to the plywood, screwing the drywall screws through its bottom and down into the wood. Be sure to put a flat washer on each screw so that the head of the screw cannot be pulled down through the plastic bottom of the tub over time.

You now have a very durable and waterproof case that is roadworthy and easy on the pocketbook!

Tony Isaac
New Caney, TX

Inverted RIMS

For drummers who are using *RIMS* mounts, here's a tip that has proven good for me. I place the *RIMS* mount on the *bottom* side of the drum, so that the mount is actually upside-down. The only adjustment I make is that I have to turn the rubber washers around for preventing metal-to-metal contact between the *RIMS* mounts and the lower drum lugs.

This mounting method allows much faster head changing, since I don't have to remove the tom from its holder. It *looks* a bit weird at first, but I find it quite cool. Also, if you are a drummer who places your toms high, this gives your tom arms a few inches of extra reach.

When I first employed this method, I even thought I heard a difference in sound: I felt as if the effect of the *RIMS* was enhanced. I won't state that as a fact, though.

Dori Larasson
Arnheim, The Netherlands

Handy Set Lists

Tired of taping pesky set lists to rugs, monitors, or cymbal stands? Solution: Write your set list on your floor tom with a wet-erase marker. Not only will you never lose your set list, but it will be easier to read. Wet-erase markers, which come in many colors, are easiest to read on clear drumheads, but they also work on coated heads. When you need to write a new set list, simply wipe off the old list with a damp towel.

Jeffrey Brandt
Puyallup, WA

Developing Ambidexterity

I'm right-handed, but I want to be as flexible as possible behind a kit. I've found that practicing on a left-handed setup really helps develop my weaker side. My left foot has greatly improved for double bass playing, and now I can use a ride cymbal with either hand.

Additionally, since I've become comfortable using traditional grip on my right hand for light snare work, I've begun practicing on a pad with *both* sticks held with the traditional grip. This way, I'll have equal dexterity in either hand, whether the style I'm playing calls for the power of matched grip or the sensitivity of traditional grip.

John Cogley
Medina, OH

Timekeeping Exercise

As a bass player, I've found the following drum-machine pattern to be a useful practice tool: two kick-off bars (1...2...1, 2, 3, 4) followed by thirty-two empty bars (no clicks or percussion sounds at all), set to play continuously. Against this, I play a quarter-note rhythm through the chord changes on a jazz standard. Each time the kick-off bars come around, I start over.

Without the benefit (or crutch) of a steady beat programmed for me, I really have to concentrate on my own good time in order to be "in time" with those first two bars each time they come around again. I'm sure that drummers would benefit from the same exercise.

Sam Burns
Denver, CO

Got A Screw Loose?

You know those tiny little hex-head set screws that hold certain parts of double bass pedals together? Well, they *always* come loose, fall out, and get lost. The Allen wrenches required to tighten them are equally tiny, and they also tend to disappear.

I replaced these screws with small thumb screws that can be tightened by hand. (If more serious tightening is necessary, you can use a pair of pliers, which are fairly easy to keep track of.) This has proven to be a *much* better system.

Charles Napolitano
Milford, CT

Securing Your Clutch

The little nut that holds my top hi-hat cymbal on the hi-hat clutch always seems to vibrate loose, causing the cymbal to drop—usually at the worst possible time. However, I've found that wrapping a few turns of *Teflon* plumber's tape around the threads cuts down on vibrations and secures the nut. A roll of tape costs around $1.50, and should serve many times before it's used up.

Mark Briggs
Dunedin, FL

Cleaning Tension Rods

When drums get older, the tension rods really get gummed up by the combination of grease and dirt that accumulates on the rods and in the lugs. I've found that removing the lugs and soaking the tension rods and the lug receivers (just the little nut that receives the rod itself, *not* the entire lug casing) in *STP Gas Treatment* for an hour or two cleans all the grease out and leaves the parts with a protective coating. Just place the metal parts in a covered container

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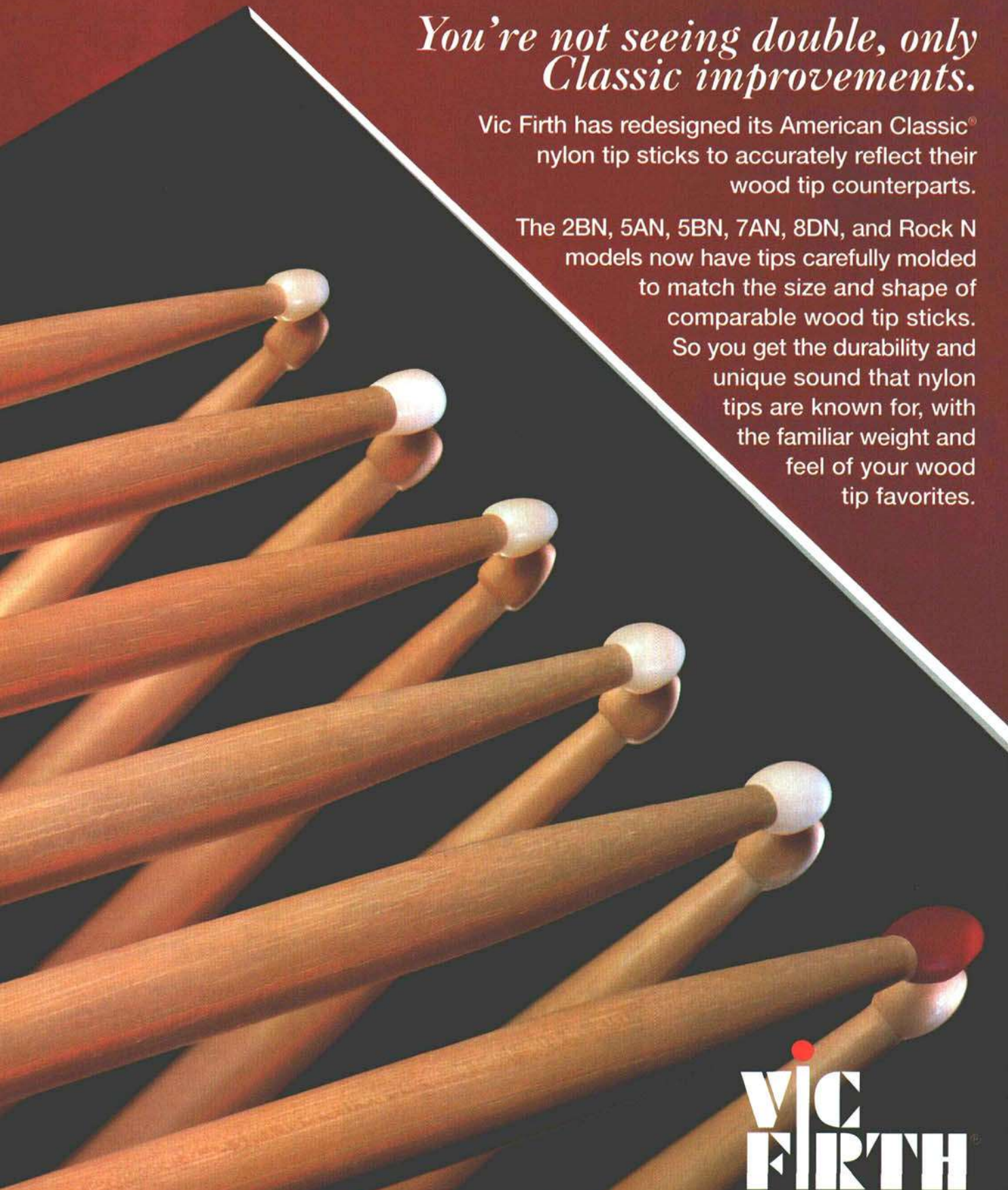

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of *STP* and shake. (Be sure to remove any plastic washers.)

After an hour, remove the parts and place them on paper towels to let them drain. Reassemble the lugs, put a drop of oil on each rod, and tune away. Assuming the receivers or the rods were not stripped or bent, this should restore the smoothness of the tuning to a like-new state. (Stripped or bent rods naturally should be replaced.)

I recently restored two twenty-five-year-old drums in this manner, and the results were amazing. Assuming normal use, this cleaning procedure should only need to be done once every few years. This is also a good time to remove the snare strainer and spray it inside and out with *WD-40,* which will clean, lubricate, and protect the metal parts.

Marc Andes
Jamaica, NY

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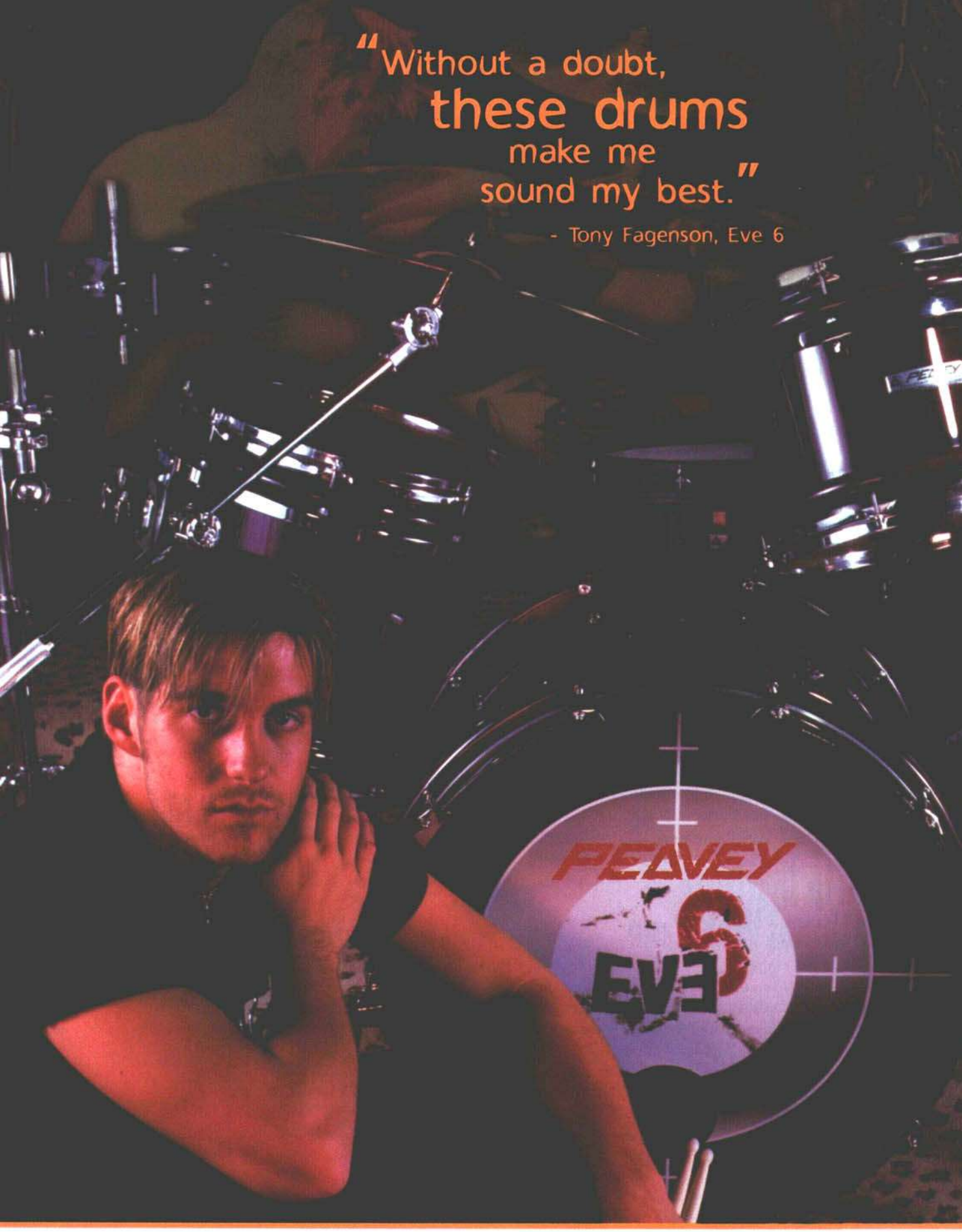

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In Memoriam

Donald Lindley

Donald Lindley, a veteran touring and recording drummer who made a significant impression on the Austin, Texas music scene, died early this year of lung cancer. He was forty-seven.

Lindley worked in Detroit, Connecticut, and Los Angeles before settling in Austin. Along the way he toured and/or recorded with a wide variety of artists. He can be heard on Dave Alvin's *King Of California,* Rosie Flores' *Honky Tonk Reprise,* Lucinda Williams' *Sweet Old World,* Joe Ely's *Twistin' In The Wind,* and Horse Whisperer's self-titled album, among dozens of others. Lindley was highly regarded for his versatility and creativity in the studio in support of singer/songwriters. Said Rosie Flores, "David was always willing to come up with a part that made you happy."

NPI/MD 1999 Summer Drum Extravaganza

The Nashville Percussion Institute and *Modern Drummer* magazine will join forces to present the 1999 NPI/MD Summer Drum Extravaganza. The event will be held Saturday, July 24 at NPI's new location at 203 McMillin St., in Nashville, Tennessee.

The Extravaganza will be co-hosted by NPI director Boo McAfee and *MD* senior editor Rick Van Horn. The current lineup (subject to change) includes a roundtable discussion featuring many of Nashville's top session drummers, and a clinic performance by a major percussion artist. (Giovanni Hidalgo had been tentatively scheduled at press time.) The day will close with an appearance by drumset star Simon Phillips. For more information, contact the Nashville Percussion Institute at (615) 340-0085.

Regal Tip Institute Educational Web Page

Regal Tip has always supported music education, from endorsing top music educators, to supporting in-school clinicians, to the development of educational programs. Taking advantage of current advances in computer technology and the Internet, the company hopes to reach even more educators and students via the "Regal Tip Institute" educational Web page.

The new site will offer suggestions, tips, and hints from some of the best music educators and players in the industry, on topics such as practice/warm-up exercises, style techniques, teaching tips, and many more. The first featured clinicians at the Institute are Steve Houghton and Kristen Shiner McGuire. Check out the Regal Tip Institute at www.regaltip.com. For more information, write Calato Manufacturing, 4501 Hyde Park Blvd., Niagara Falls, NY 14305, or email regaltip@aol.com.

PMC Makes 1999 The Year Of The Leopard

The Percussion Marketing Council (PMC), the drum industry's trade association dedicated to promoting the art of drumming nationwide, has "adopted" The Fabulous Leopards percussion group. The PMC will be developing a series of programs to support and promote the Leopards throughout the year.

Created by third-grade teacher Diane Parker at the Martin Luther King elementary school in Louisville, Kentucky, The Fabulous Leopards are an award-winning group of six- to twelve-year-old drummers and percussionists that grew out of a voluntary after-school program sponsored by the Jefferson County, Kentucky school district. The young musicians, who must meet and maintain strict educational standards in order to remain eligible to play with the group, are taught through a unique oral teaching system developed by Parker. Her method favors a combination of listening, word association, repetition, and music appreciation over a more traditional music reading-based program. Says Parker, "With this program, we've been able to take an entire class of kids as young as seven and get them all playing music within weeks."

In addition to producing a series of trading card-style public-service ads featuring the Leopards and the PMC's "Be A Player" message, the organization plans a national publicity campaign to significantly increase the visibility of the young drummers. Industry-sponsored Leopard performances are scheduled for October's PAS convention in Columbus, Ohio, selected Winter Guard indoor drum competitions, and the International Association of Jazz Educators convention in January of 2000.

For details on this or other ongoing PMC programs, including International Drum Month and the Middle School Concert Series, contact the PMC at 12665 Kling St., Studio City, CA 91604, tel: (818) 753-1310, fax: (818) 753-1313, email: dlevine360@aol.com.

Indy Quickies

Pro-Mark has become an official sponsor of Winter Guard International. The company has made a major commitment to marching percussion over the past three years, having already become a sponsor of Drum Corps International and Bands of America. In addition, Pro-Mark artist relations manager Jeff Hartsough and education coordinator Staci Stokes both have extensive backgrounds in drum corps activity, including associa-

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tions with such corps as Spirit of Atlanta, Santa Clara Vanguard, Blue Knights, and Carolina Crown.

The Music Go Round chain of retail music stores takes a slightly different approach to providing equipment to aspiring musicians. In addition to a full complement of new instruments and accessories, the chain's sixty-five stores offer a wide variety of used instruments at between 1/3 and 1/2 their original price. The stores also welcome trade-ins, and will pay cash for used instruments. Those instruments are inspected, cleaned, polished, and tuned, and are guaranteed playable. Information on store locations is available at (612) 520-8500 or www.musicgoround.com.

Sabian's factory has new postal and email addresses. The new postal address is Sabian Ltd., 219 Main St., Meductic, NB E6H 2L5, Canada. The email address is sabian@sabian.com.

Taking The Stage

Festivals, Upcoming Drum Clinics, Concerts, and Events

Amores Grup De Percussion
6/15 — Valencia, Spain. Contact Angel Garcia, email: amores@retemail.es

Berklee College of Music World Percussion Festival
8/17-22 — Staff members include Mohamad Camara, Randy Crafton, Sa Davis, Kenwood Dennard, Ernesto Diaz, Dave DiCenso, Joe Galiota, Jamey Haddad, Skip Hadden, Victor Mendoza, John Ramsay, Mikael Ringquis, Bobby Sanabria, Casey Scheuerell, Steve Wilkes, Giovanni Hidalgo, Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez, Karl Perazzo, Raul Rekow, Trichy Sankaran, Arthur Hull, Valarie Naranjo, and Orestes Vilato. Berklee College, Boston, MA, (617) 266-1400

Joe Bonadio
7/11 — Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, IL, (217)581-3817

Terry Bozzio
6/26 — Mars Music, Austin, TX, (512)451-9990
10/3 — Stockholm Drumfestival, Stockholm, Sweden

Central Michigan University Percussion Workshop
7/11-24 — Central Michigan University, Mount Pleasant, MI, (517)774-1943

Julie Davila
7/13 — University Of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, MS

Lalo Davila
7/13 — University Of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, MS

Peter Erskine
8/3 — Hillard Summer Festival, Trinity Hall, Cambridge, England

Dom Famularo
8/2-8 — KoSA Workshop, Crane School Of Music, Potsdam, NY, (800) 541-8401
10/3 — Stockholm Drumfestival, Stockholm, Sweden

Neal Flum
7/7 — Mobile Percussion Seminar/USC, Greenville, SC

Mark Ford
6/23 — Bands Of America, Summer Symposium, Schaumburg, IL, (800) 848-2263

Richie Garcia
10/3 — Stockholm Drumfestival, Stockholm, Sweden

Rick Gratton
6/21 — Island Drum, Nanaimo, BC, Canada, (205) 756-4699
6/22 — Toews Music, Clearbrook, BC, Canada
6/23 —World of Music, Kamloops, BC, Canada
6/24 — Wentworth Music, Kelowna, BC, Canada

Thom Hannum
6/21 — Bands Of America, Summer Symposium, Schaumburg, IL
7/7 — Mobile Percussion Seminar/USC, Greenville, SC
7/30 —West Chester University, Summer Camp, West Chester, PA
7/31 — DCI Clinic, Allentown, MI
8/3 — UMASS Summer Camp, Amherst MA
8/15 — DCI Clinic, Madison, FL
8/21 — MTSU Percussion Camp, Murfreesboro, TN

Steve Houghton
6/17 — IAJE Teacher Training Institute, Orlando, FL
6/21-23 — Bands of America, Schaumburg, IL, (800) 848-2263
6/24-26 — Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, PA, (412) 396-6080
7/11-15 — Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, IL, (217)581-3817
8/2-3-9-10 — Mancini Institute, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA, (310) 845-1900

KoSA
8/2-8 — Artists tentatively scheduled include John Beck, Changuito, Jim Chapin, Dom Famularo, Gordon Gottlieb, Horacio Hernandez, Marco Leinhard, Bill Ludwig II, Aldo Mazza, Jim Petercsak, Repercussion, Ed Shaughnessy, Gordon Stout, and Glen Velez. Crane School of Music, Potsdam, NY, (800) 541-8401

Juilliard Summer Percussion Seminar
7/25-8/1 — "Designed specifically for high school students." Contact Janis Potter, seminar coordinator, (301) 809-0955

Chris Lee
7/7 — Mobile Percussion Seminar/USC, Greenville, SC

Manhattan School Of Music Summer Jazz Workshop
6/21-7/9 — Staff members include Justin DiCioccio and John Riley. Manhattan School of Music, New York, NY, (212) 749-2802, ext. 523

Mike Mann
7/6 — USA Percussion Camp, Effingham, IL

Percfest '99
7/2-4, featuring memorial to Giuseppe "Naco" Bonaccorso, Laiqueglia, Italy. Contact Mario Riggio, fax: 39 010 3727733, email: mariggio@tin.it

Mike Portnoy
10/3 — Stockholm Drumfestival, Stockholm, Sweden

Paul Rennick
6/23 — North Texas Marching Camp, Dallas, TX

John Riley
6/28-7/2 —Workshop, Youngstown State University, Youngstown, OH, (330) 742-3643
7/26-31 — Workshop, William Paterson University, Wayne, NJ, (973) 720-2320

N. Scott Robinson
6/18 — Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, OH, (216)421-7340

Ed Shaughnessy
6/27-7/9 — Skidmore Jazz Institute, Saratoga Springs, NY, (518)580-5590
8/2-8 — KoSA Workshop, Crane School Of Music, Potsdam, NY, (800)541-8401

Summer '99 Percussion Camp
6/21-25 — Duquense University, Pittsburgh, PA, (800) 934-0159

University Of North Texas Summer Drumset Workshop
7/11-16 — Staff includes Bob Breithaupt, Guy Remonko, Ed Soph, and Ed Uribe. Contact Ed Soph, University of North Texas, Denton, TX, (940) 369-7536

United States Percussion Camp
7/11-17 — Professor Johnny Lee Lane, Jack McKenzie, Ndugu Chancier, Ruben Alvarez, Joe Bonadio, Gary Chaffee, Jim Dallas, Samuel Dinkins, Steve Houghton, Mike Mann, Lewis Nash, Don Parker, and more. Eastern IL University, Charleston, IL, (217) 581-3925

Ed Uribe
7/10 — North Texas State University, Denton, TX
7/24 — Capitol University, Columbus OH

This listing includes the most current information available at press time; details subject to change. For a more comprehensive listing, see the *News* section *of Modern Drummer Online,* www.moderndrummer.com.

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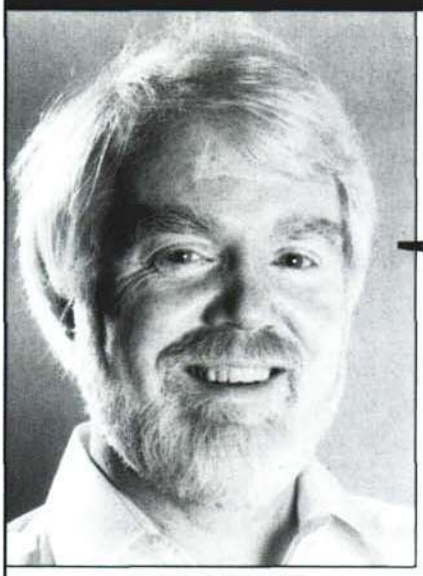

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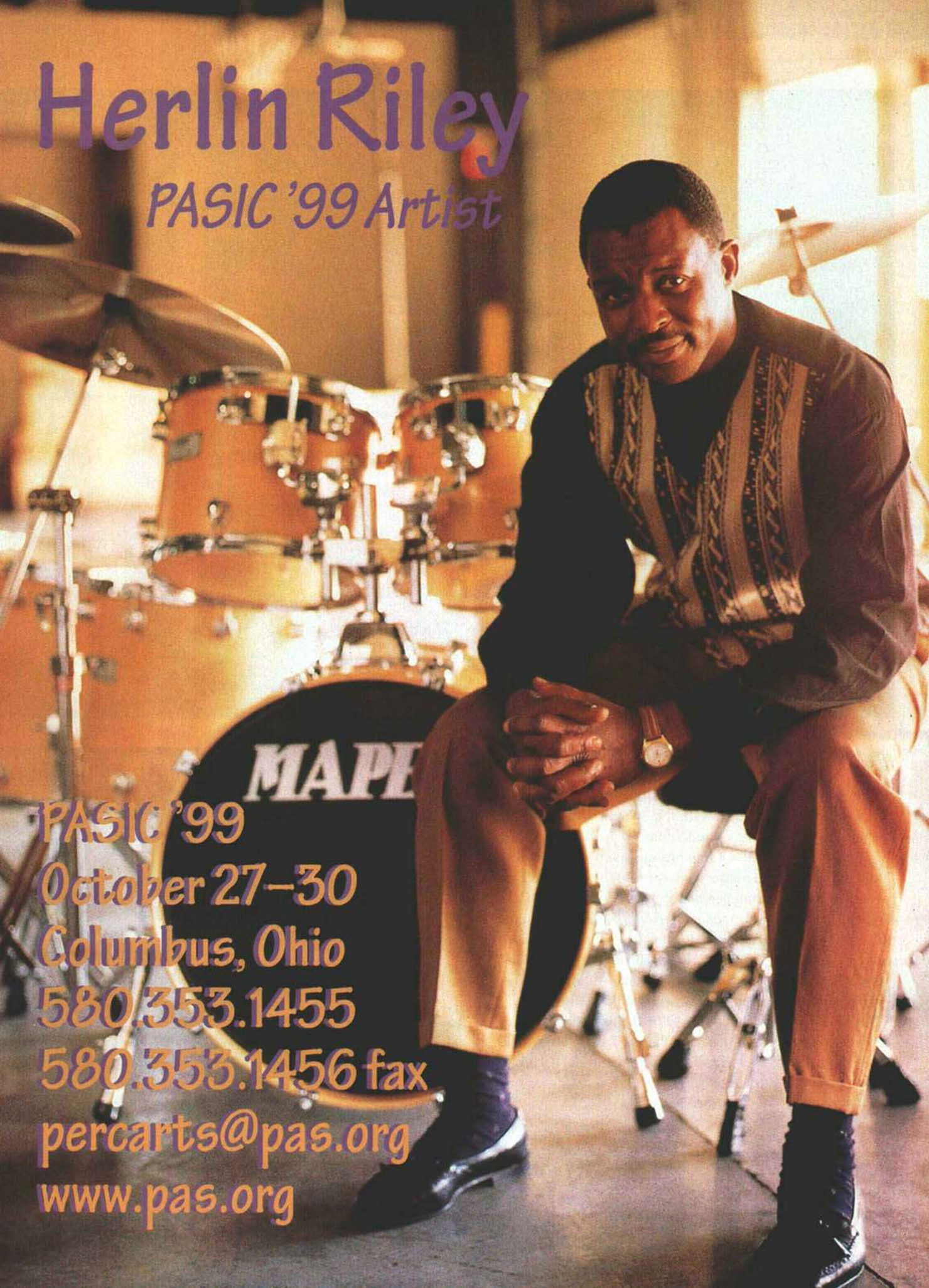
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Doug Bennett's mid-'70s Zickos kit is clearly different from most others. And that's not just because it features clear acrylic shells, but also because of the sizes of its components. The Newark, New York drummer's kit features two 18x22 bass drums, four (!) 10x14 rack toms, two 18x18 floor toms, a Tama piccolo snare, and a Rogers 5x14 *Powertone* secondary snare. (Doug didn't tell us about the mystery drum perched above the rack toms.)

Doug also uses an unusual cymbal setup. It includes three pairs of hi-hats (one 16" and two 14"), three rides (one 22" and two 20"), two 18" crash-rides, 14", 15", and 16" crashes, a 10" splash, and a 20" China—all A Zildjians.

"The drums are really beefy when miked," says Doug. "The kicks are punchy, with a lot of bottom." Besides enjoying their sound, Doug says that he "really enjoys the look" of his kit. In a classic understatement, he adds, "They're kind of rare these days."

PHOTO REQUIREMENTS

1. Photos must be high-quality and in color. 35mm slides are preferred; color prints will be considered; Polaroids not accepted. 2. You may send more than one view of the kit. 3. Only show drums, no people. 4. Shoot drums against a neutral background. Avoid "busy" backgrounds. 5. Clearly highlight special attributes of your kit. Send photo(s) to: Drumkit Of The Month, Modern Drummer, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009-1288. Photos cannot be returned.

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